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CSC announces year-end break, New Year holiday

Amir's health stable: Diwan

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): The health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah remains stable, said the Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sunday.

Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah expressed wishes of good health and rapid recovery for His Highness the Amir.

Work resumes Jan 2

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): The Civil Service Commission announced the suspension of work in all ministries, government agencies, public bodies and institutions on Sunday, December 31st, considering it a rest day, and Monday, January 1st, 2024, an official holiday.

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Manila delegation in Kuwait for crucial labor talks

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Ambassador of the Philippines to Kuwait Jose Cabrera III has confirmed that a Philippine delegation, consisting of officials from the Foreign Affairs and Migrant Workers

departments in Manila will arrive in Kuwait on Tuesday to discuss labor issues with their counterparts here, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Cabrera told the daily: "The re-

sumption of the recruitment of Filipino workers will be the focal point of the discussions with the Kuwaiti side. We hope the results of the meetings will be fruitful and satisfactory for both sides."

Opinion

Decide and go for it

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

YOUR Highness the Crown Prince, despite the high-pitched warnings issued by Your Highness during the opening of the current session, the situation between the two authorities are still proceeding in an unprogressive manner; in fact, it has become worse than before.

The accountability of the Prime Minister revealed the fact that both the MPs and ministers do not have the minimum ability to work in accordance with the royal directives. This is because they have become accustomed to an old habit, which is to forget what is important or even what is most important in order to pass on anything that serves their interests.

There is no doubt that the recent decision you issued put an end to the chaos of appointments, the aim of which was to remove the trophy of "non-cooperation" from the Prime Minister.

Was it in the amnesty decree that did not take into account the rights of blood relatives, which violates the law, the Constitution, and Sharia as well? Or was it in the passing of demands that burden public finances without study, transfer, delegation, and other things that were woven overnight, which revealed the lack of equality between citizens, as well as circumventing the laws?

Yes, there are many parliamentarians who made amends in the last days that preceded the interpellation. The parliamentary leak from Abdullah Al-Salem Hall revealed the extent of the deals that were concluded for this purpose.

This undoubtedly means that all the slogans raised either by ministers or parliamentarians regarding reform are nothing but "clichés" for the need of political consumption. This means following neither the government's announced program, nor the pledges made by the representatives to the voters.

All of this has become a queer place among the Kuwaitis. After being optimistic about the outcomes of the current National Assembly and some of the ministers who were characterized by the ability to get out of the impasse that the country is suffering from, the citizens have now been disappointed.

Therefore, their support for Your Highness's decision was unanimous. This is evidence that the people see a glimmer of hope in the beginning of greater steps, all of which will lead to getting Kuwait out of the tunnel it has been walking through for years due to the escapades and political adventures of the two authorities.

Today, there is a greater need to complete this huge task that falls on the shoulders of those who are in charge, and for the economy to be the basis because it is the lever for the rest of the sectors.

The most important point in this is to diversify sources of income, and to work like neighboring countries, which are similar to us in nature and culture, but differ in one thing, which is the decision to work on improving the national product. When a quarter of Kuwait's GDP is rents, this means a major flaw in the vision and economic program. When dependence on oil is around 96 percent, this also indicates a misunderstanding of the meaning of prudent planning at all executive levels.

Your Highness the Crown Prince, there must be an economic boom, and we must work to satisfy the people, within our capabilities, and not burden public finances with more useless spending.

All of this is the result of governmental mistakes that have been ongoing for years, as if Kuwait is being run with the mentality of a grocery store and not a State.

There is no doubt that all of this needs serious reform without any considerations for quotas and familial, tribal, or sectarian identity.

The situation in the world has become so volatile that it does not accept any escapades, or betting on favoritism.

Therefore, it is necessary to literally implement what was stated in the royal speech so that Kuwait can prepare for what the future holds, and we do not reach a day when we cry over spilled milk.

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Day by Day

PRAISE be to God and thanks to Him that the Ministry of Commerce, as we read, removed some goods from the ration card.

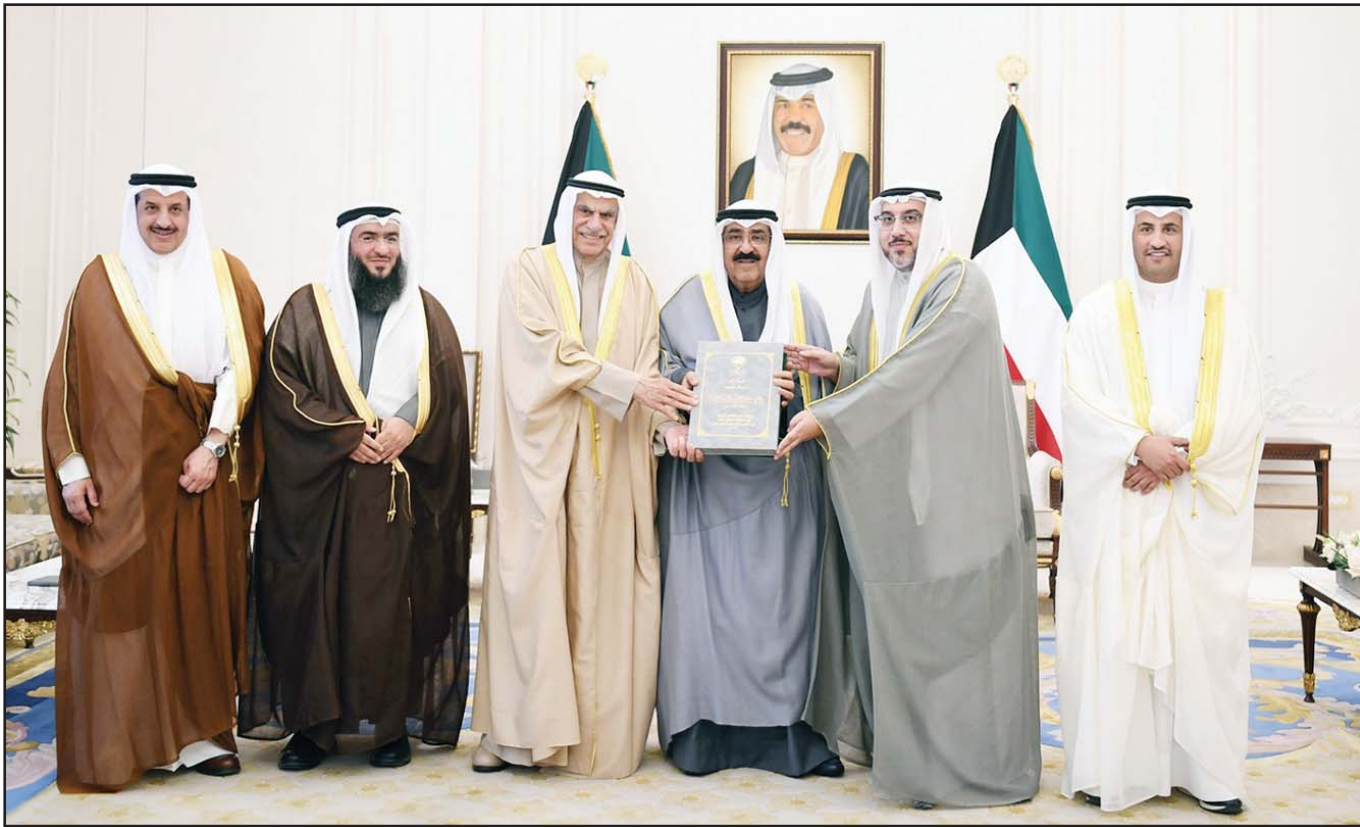
In this regard, we say: The support is not necessary, and it is better to stop it, and let the government move to increase the salaries of those who are unable to cope with the ever rising cost of living that the whole world is experiencing.

The prices of commodities are rising and in the midst of this job cadres are unfair...
... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Flu surge in Kuwait 'normal'

HH Crown Prince receives Parliament Speaker



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday at Bayan Palace National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Abdulaziz Al-Saadon. During the meeting, His Highness the Crown Prince also received Committee Members of the Response Draft Letter on the Amiri Speech, which included

Member of Parliament (MP) Osama Al-Shaheen, Committee Rapporteur MP Bader Al-Enezi, MP Hamad Al-Obaid, National Assembly Secretary General Khaled Saad Abusulaib, where they presented to His Highness the Crown Prince the Letter Response for the 17th First Legislative Session of 2023.

Crown Prince Diwan photo

Al-Mutair warns against distrust-sowing efforts

Deputy speaker affirms loyalty to leadership

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Deputy National Assembly Speaker MP Muhammad Al-Mutair has affirmed his loyalty to the political leadership -- HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; stressing this is the position of majority of the MPs.

Al-Mutair pointed out that Kuwait has passed through several crises; and every time, it comes out stronger, thanks to the citizens' unity and unwavering loyalty to the political leadership. "However, some parties are keen on instigating crises and chaos as they can survive and flourish under such circumstances only. While we are reaping the fruits of the unprecedented coordination between the government and the Assembly, these suspicious parties have started to doubt the achievements and even the MPs' loyalty to the political leadership. They spread rumors and lies on social media, using fake and suspicious accounts. The lawmakers are keen on obeying the instructions and directives of HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince," he added.

He confirmed that it is his duty as a lawmaker to draw the citizens' attention to the plots of some parties to create cracks in the trust between the people and the rulers, as well as between the MPs and political leadership. He asserted that Allah Almighty always protects Kuwait, imploring Him to bless Kuwait and for the speedy recovery of HH the Amir.

Meanwhile, MP Khalid Al-Otaibi disclosed that he is preparing two bills on the amendment of the Elections Law in order to guarantee a relatively fair representation of the five constituencies, taking into consideration that absolute fairness is implausible.

He said one of the bills will be based on the current number of constituencies -- five, but the structure is different as the country will be divided into two big constituencies with the first, second and fourth constituencies will be merged into one; while the third and fifth will constitute the second constituency. He explained this narrows the gap between the number of voters in each constituency, without getting into disputes and arguments resulting from the suggestion to transfer some areas from one constituency to another. He added the difference between the number of voters in the first constituency and the second constituency will be reduced to only 3,000 under the proposed system. He pointed out that some constituencies are almost closed now due to the absence of expansion works, so the increase of voters is very minimal; while there are expansion works in other constituencies with the possibility of a remarkable increase in the number of voters due to the construction of new residential areas. He affirmed this problem will be addressed once the two-constituencies system is adopted, because one will represent the North and the other will represent the South.

On his second bill, Al-Otaibi revealed it is still based on the current five constituencies; each of which will elect nine MPs or a total 45 MPs. The remaining five parliamentary seats will be filled by taking the top five among all the candidates who failed to win a seat in their respective constituencies.

In another development, five parliamentary committees on Monday discussed items in their agendas and the tasks assigned by the Assembly.

The committee tasked to investigate the violations in the armament deals -- Eurofighter and Caracal helicopters -- continued the investigations in the presence of State Audit Bureau (SAB) Chairman Essam Al-Romi and some senior officials.

The Budgets and Final Accounts Committee deliberated on SAB's report about the budget of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for fiscal 2022/2023, as well as the comments of the Bureau of Financial Controllers (BFC). Present at the meeting were representatives of the Ministry of Finance, SAB, BFC, Civil Service Commission (CSC) and Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT).

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Difficult COP28 talks enter final days

'Explorer' highlights Kuwait's climate action role

DUBAI, Dec 11, (Agencies): The "Explorer" ship is a reflection of Kuwait's active role in facing environmental challenges and conducting research in marine sciences.

Kuwait's Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Explorer ship took part in the United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference of the Parties COP28 to shed light on the Kuwaiti efforts in tackling environmental challenges.

This participation by KISR showcased scientific studies by shedding light on other research and experimentation being trialed by the ship to further understand the effects of climate change on the oceans and marine life.

The ship is specialized for conducting research in oceanography and marine biology in Kuwait waters and the Arabian Gulf.

In other news, visibly tired and frustrated top United Nations officials urged climate

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) 'Explorer' ship takes part in COP28 summit held in Dubai.

News watch

RIYADH: Halting the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip is an integral part of upholding international human rights, said Secretary General of the GCC Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Monday.

In a statement by the GCC Secretariat, Al-Budaiwi affirmed that the countries in the Gulf region took huge strides to reinforce the respect of human rights.

The statement, which came to commemorate the Human Rights Day on December 10, added that Al-Budaiwi called on the world to intervene and halt the Israeli brutal aggression on the Gaza Strip, saying that the attacks on innocent Gazans and Palestinians went against all international human rights. (KUNA)

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday held the first hearing for a Swedish citizen who was detained last year on charges of spying for Israel, media reported.

A report by Mizanonline.ir news website, which is affiliated with the country's judiciary, said that the prosecutor accused the man who was identified as Johan Floderus of "having links with Israeli elements" and gathering information for Israel in the framework of projects through American, Israeli and European institutes that were active against the Islamic Republic of Iran. (AP)

CAIRO: Egyptians arrived in droves to polling stations across all governorates to participate in the second day of the 2024 presidential elections.

The first day of the presidential race also saw intense participation with flocks of elderly coming in to cast their votes. (KUNA)

Iraq moves to contain US-Iran conflict, fearing Gaza spillover

BAGHDAD, Dec 11, (AP): Dozens of attacks on U.S. military facilities by Iran-backed factions in Iraq over the past two months have forced the government in Baghdad to perform a balancing act that is becoming more difficult by the day.

A rocket attack on the sprawling U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on Friday marked a further escalation as Iraqi officials scramble to contain the ripple effects of the Israel-Hamas war.

Iran holds considerable sway in Iraq and a coalition of Iran-backed groups brought Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani to power in October 2022. But at the same time, there are some 2,000 U.S. forces stationed in Iraq under an agreement with Baghdad, mainly to counter the extremist Islamic State group.

Baghdad also relies heavily on

Continued on Page 5

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:07 Asr 14:32
 Sunrise... 06:32 Maghrib .. 16:50
 Zohr 11:41 Isha 18:12

Local

BIOMETRIC/FINGERPRINT APPOINTMENT: <https://meta.e.gov.kw/En/>

Embassy of Japan

‘Learning Japanese language not difficult’

The Embassy of Japan in Kuwait held the 16th Japanese Speech Contest in collaboration with the Center for Community Service & Continuing Education at Kuwait University and the Japanese Society in Kuwait, on Sunday, December 10, 2023. The National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) hosted the contest in the National Library of Kuwait.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Mr. Morino Yasunari, Ambassador of Japan to the State of Kuwait expressed great delight in having been able to hold the event for sixteen years, showing his appreciation for the continuous support of the Center for Community Service & Continuing Education at Kuwait University for the Japanese language education since 1996.

The Ambassador also expressed his desire for more Kuwaiti people to join in learning Japanese language which is not so difficult as it might look, but rather is very much interesting.

Very ardent Japanese language learners participated in the contest, in the presence of audience of more than sixty people interested in the Japanese language and culture. The excellent performance shown by the contestants on stage impressed everyone indeed.

A side event took place as well, as a special guest, Ms. Dag Alsharefeen Merve, Academic Coordinator of J-MENA (Study in Japan Global Network Project in Middle East & North Africa) Ankara Office, Kyushu University, gave a presentation promoting studying in Japan with general information of various Japanese famous universities.

Also, participants enjoyed watching the live performance of the Japanese martial art “Aikido”, performed by Aikikai, which is a group of experienced Aikido players in Kuwait.

Kurihara Rie
 Second Secretary
 Embassy of Japan



KUNA photo
 Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Ambassador Bader Al-Tanaib meets the Foreign Minister of Senegal.

‘Kuwait eyes broader ties with African countries’

By Nasser Al-Khamri

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Ambassador Bader Al-Tanaib said Sunday that Kuwait is keen on developing and facilitating broader cooperation with African countries in all vital domains.

In statements to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Tanaib said that Kuwait is eager to play a role on the international platform to help elucidate solutions for causes that threaten international peace

and security.

He pointed out that he has recently tackled these issues with African officials during his participation in the 9th edition of the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Senegal.

He pointed out that topics of discussion on the course of two days encompassed Cyber Security and digital challenges, ways to operate African Standby Force (ASF), as well as contributions of civil society in its resilience in confronting greed in the management of natural resources on the continent.

Al-Tanaib noted that he has visited Senegal, Cape Verde and Gambia, where written messages of mutual officers were delivered on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Ways of advancing levels of trade exchange and investment, the role of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development in financing development projects in African countries, Kuwaiti charitable societies role in providing humanitarian aid and the implementation of signed agreements were also discussed.

Solicitors, bailiffs jailed for leaking info

Doctors, skilled workers not in bankruptcy law

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: In a final ruling, the Court of Appeals excluded doctors and professionals from the scope of application of the new bankruptcy law.

In the first ruling of its kind, the Court of Appeals decided to cancel the judge's decision to launch bankruptcy proceedings against a Kuwaiti citizen who works as a consultant doctor and owns a private medical center, and to appoint a bankruptcy trustee.

The incident occurred when a group of creditors filed bankruptcy petitions against the citizen, based on the accumulation of debts against him, his inability to pay them, and his incapacity in his medical center.

As a result, the Bankruptcy Department reviewed the applications and referred them to the Bankruptcy Committee, which submitted a report and recommended appointing a trustee from the roster of auditors licensed by the Capital Markets Authority to carry out an inventory of the debtor's financial assets and property. Accordingly, the bankruptcy judge issued a decision to declare the citizen bankrupt and take all precautionary measures against him.

The doctor's defense counsel Lawyer Dr. Fawaz Al-Khateeb said the law grants special protection to professionals and excludes them from the scope of application of the bankruptcy law because they are not considered merchants, adding that the ruling of the Court of Appeals is considered final and may not be appealed by any means of appeal, and it shall be implemented as drafted without notice.

The point confirmed by the Court of Appeals was that the scope of application of the bankruptcy law to doctors is in accordance with the correct law and achieves the desired stability for doctors and professionals. This is a final ruling that may not be appealed before the Court of Cassation in accordance with the new bankruptcy law.

Solicitors jailed: The Court of Cassation yesterday sentenced several solicitors and bailiffs to imprisonment



Photo by Mahmoud Morsi
 Some of the workers holding protest placards.

MEW workers stage sit-in

A group of employees from the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy staged a sit-in on Monday morning within the ministry's premises, advocating for their allowances and what they consider as their rightful dues, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Their primary concern revolves around the challenging and perilous nature of their work environment. Emphasizing their commitment, they declared their intention to continue the sit-in until their entitlements are acknowledged.

Eng. Hassan Al-Roudhan, the

for varying periods ranging between six months and one year, followed by their deportation, after they were convicted of disclosing confidential case information.

The Court of Appeals' Misdemeanor Circuit had overturned the verdicts issued in the case of “disclosing information related to cases being discussed and pending before the courts” filed against 26 defendants including bailiffs at the Ministry of Justice, female lawyers, and solicitors.

A female lawyer, a bailiff, and a solicitor were issued with a suspended sentence of three months at a bail of KD 500 each, two bailiffs were fined KD 500 and KD 1,000, and two others were acquitted.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendants from the first to the 13th in their capacity as those tasked with public service - the bailiffs of courts in the Ministry of Justice – for disclosing

information related to cases being discussed and pending before the courts in which they work, despite the obligation of confidentiality and not to be circulated except with permission from the concerned court for the concerned parties, and by means legally established.

This is because they photographed some of the rulings, decisions, and documents in those cases using their mobile phone cameras, and then disclosed the information to each other, as well as to the defendants from the 14th to 26th, through their mobile phones and through instant messaging programs such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Imo, Messenger.

Their action would harm the interest of the entity they work for, as well as achieve the private interest of others. They intentionally misused the means of communications for committing the crime described above.

Weather

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate southerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06-26 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold to cold

and cloudy with light southeasterly wind to light to moderate variable wind, with speed of 08-28 km/h.

Station **Max Exp** **Min Rec**
 Kuwait City 22 16

Kuwait Airport 29 12
 Abdaly 29 13
 Jahra 28 15
 Salmiyah 21 17
 Nuwaisib 29 13
 Wafra 31 13



PM Diwan photo
 HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah (center) during the cabinet session.

Cabinet prays for HH Amir's speedy recovery

‘Iraq must respect Kuwait's sovereignty, territory’

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): The Council of Ministers convened for its regular session this morning at Bayan Palace, led by Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, as well as Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Issa Ahmad Al-Kandari, issued the following statement:

At the outset of the session, the Council of Ministers conveyed reassurance regarding the health of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praying for his continued well-being and a swift recovery. The Deputy Prime Minister expressed gratitude to God Almighty for the stable health condition of His Highness.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

briefed the Council on the outcomes of his representation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the 44th session of the Supreme Council of Their Majesties and Highnesses, Leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, held in Doha last Tuesday. The meeting included the participation of the President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as a guest. Discussions during the session centered on reinforcing joint Gulf action across various domains, addressing regional and international issues such as the developments in the Gaza Strip and ongoing violations of Palestinian territories.

Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also informed the Cabinet of Ministers about the final statement issued by the 44th session, emphasizing that the entire Al-Durra field falls within Kuwait's maritime jurisdiction. It af-

firmed that the joint ownership of the Al-Durra field, located in the submerged area adjacent to the Saudi-Kuwaiti division, rests solely between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait. Both nations have exclusive rights to exploit natural resources in that region in accordance with international law and existing agreements.

The final statement underscored the importance of Iraq respecting Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity, urging adherence to bilateral and international commitments, including UN Security Council Resolution No. 833/1993 on the demarcation of Kuwait-Iraqi land and sea borders. The Council called upon Iraq to expedite the demarcation of maritime borders beyond Mark 162 and adhere to the 2012 agreement on maritime navigation in Khor Abdullah, effective since December 5, 2013.

‘Kindness to parents, elderly, nation boosts social security’

Minister to patronize ‘Meritorious Child’ ceremony

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The arbitration committee of the Ibrahim Taher Al-Baghli Foundation's Award of “The Meritorious Child” approved the names of the winners in all competitions of the award, and the names of the meritorious children of Kuwait for the year 2023.

The committee announced the organization of the awarding ceremony, under the patronage of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Al-Malik, to honor all the winners on December 18 in the Al-Baraka Hall of the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

In a press conference held the day before yesterday, in the presence of the Chairman of the



Sheikh Firas

Award's Supreme Committee Ali Hassan, the Chairman of the Jury and Evaluation Committee Mansour Al-Salamin, and representatives of government institutions and civil society organizations that coordinate with Foundation in organizing competitions, the Foundation's President Ibrahim Al-Baghli affirmed that the Foundation is concluding its 17th edition by honoring 23 personalities and 42 winners.

He stressed the importance of promoting among children the virtue of kindness to parents, the elderly, and the nation, which contributes to consolidating social security.

Expressed

Al-Baghli expressed his great happiness at continuing to sponsor the award for 17 years, adding, “This matter has presented us with a great challenge and a great responsibility towards volunteer, humanitarian and charitable work.

It was an incentive for us to exert more effort and achieve our goals in consolidating the rules of social, humanitarian and voluntary work through the Foundation, to benefit all segments and spectrums of society.”

Al-Baghli thanked everyone who contributed to sponsoring and disseminating the award's message, individuals and institutions, especially the Minister of Social Affairs, the Undersecretary, the Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development Affairs, and the Assistant Undersecretary for Social Welfare.

He also thanked the press and media outlets, public benefit associations, foundations, governmental and private institutions, and volunteers who contributed to providing moral and media support for the award since its inception.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the



KUNA photo
 The Joint Kuwaiti-American Cooperation Committee (JCC) holds its regular meeting, headed by the Director of Kuwaiti Military Cooperation Brigadier General Fahad Al-Otaibi.

US-Kuwait Military JCC hold meet

The US-Kuwaiti Military Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) held its regular meeting on Monday at the Armed Forces' operations and plans authority and headed by Director of Military Cooperation, Brigadier General Fahad Al-Otaibi, and a senior figure from the US Army,

according to a statement released by the Ministry of Defense.

The objective of these meetings is to assess joint efforts, examine findings, and explore avenues for enhancing bilateral relations across diverse military domains. (KUNA)

Award's Supreme Committee Ali Hassan explained that the Award continues its mission for which it was launched, which is to be a driving force in stimulating creative energies and honoring those with distinguished talents and creative thoughts that serve Al-Mabarrah's mission and achieve its goals towards charity causes. These causes aim to be supportive and enable individuals and civil society organizations to face all challenges, and to inspire in them optimism and hope for a bright tomorrow, as they are the basic foundation of volunteer, charitable and humanitarian work and its development.

Hassan said, “Since the Chairman of the Board of Directors' interest in the literature of volunteer, charitable and humanitarian work began, we have taken upon ourselves the responsibility of developing the entrepreneurial thought of individuals and civil society organizations as they are a basic pillar of volunteer work that contributes greatly to achieving the desired goals on one hand, and promoting the virtue of righteousness and consolidating volunteer work in society on the other hand, which contributes to achieving the goals of the Foundation.”

Revealed

He revealed that the total number of participants in the award competitions for the year 2023 reached 212 participants who were all competing for first places in eight competitions of “The Meritorious Child” award, adding that the names and positions of the winners were determined by specialized arbitration committees.

In this regard, a total of 212 people

participated in this year's Al-Baghli Award for the Meritorious Child competitions, including 91 boys and 121 girls. The number of winners was 22 girls and 20 boys. The number of participants in the main award was 60, including 6 boys and 7 girls but no boys won.

As for the Al-Baghli Award for the Meritorious Child for Voluntary Work, 45 participants from individuals and civil society organizations participated. At the individual level, 42 participated, including 16 boys and 26 girls. At the charitable organization level, three organizations participated, and the number of winners was six, including three boys and one girl, and two from charity organizations.

In the short story competition, 21 participated, including 10 boys, and the number of winners was three out of which two were boys.

In the photography competition, eight participated, including three boys and five girls, from whom two boys and two girls won.

As for the Eloquent Poetry and Popular Poetry competition, 15 participants participated, including ten boys and five girls, and the winners were two boys and two girls.

The number of participants in the Fine Arts competition was 32, including ten boys and 22 girls. The number of winners was one boy and five girls.

In the Caricature Art competition, 27 participated, including ten boys and 17 girls. The number of winners was three boys and three girls.

The number of participants in the Heritage and Handicrafts competition was 27, including 18 boys and nine girls. The number of winners was five boys and one girl.



Al-Khateeb

diwaniya

ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

‘Loyal Kuwaiti judges will lead country to correct, fair path’

“WE were very pleased with the news of the arrest of two suspects who burned Chancellor Sultan Buresli’s vehicle before a historic verdict was issued against defendants who had previously been acquitted,” columnist **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

“Previous acquittal verdicts had sparked public dissatisfaction, until the Court of Cassation ruled to imprison some of the defendants, after choosing an honest judge known for his loyalty and patriotism, Counselor Sultan Buresli, as its new judge.

“The two defendants, according to what the Ministry of the Interior announced, are of those with a criminal record, and a large quantity of narcotic drugs, firearms, and sums of cash were seized from their possession. Information suggests that they are merely a tool used to intimidate and threaten the Counselor, in a failed attempt to influence the impartial judiciary, which sparked a strong response and rejection of this low-level approach to confronting the word of truth.

“The burning incident occurred just before the curtain came down on this file and the countdown began. After the historic ruling was issued against the accused at the hands of Counselor Sultan Buresli, it could give clear “indications” about the motives for the crime of arson, which is equivalent to the crime of murder.

“I know that no one has the right to conclude anything that is under investigation, but because this case is considered an issue of public opinion, some have tried to obscure and close it in a way that is far from right and fair, and to punish those who stole and misappropriated public money. Punishment for those who tried to terrorize the judiciary, regardless of their status, position and history, makes us all draw our conclusions.

“The happiness we felt at the speedy arrest of whoever committed the crime of burning Counselor Buresli’s vehicle and threatening his life and his family, confirms to us that the Interior Ministry, praise be to God, is on constant vigilance, as evidenced by the speed in seizing the first clues of any crime occurring in Kuwait.

“I am almost certain that everyone is waiting for the end of the investigations and the announcement of the party or people behind the whole matter, and he will certainly be the first and main victim of the rulings expected at that time, that is, before they are issued.

“It is very clear that the issue is far from the two accused of burning Counselor Buresli’s vehicle, because, according to the information published about them after their arrest (and God knows best), they are merely tools for someone bigger.



Iqbal Al-Ahmad

“They are much simpler than having a direct interest in burning Chancellor Bursley’s vehicle, and they are nothing but a tool used to threaten the judiciary from saying the strong word of truth, and what was feared was fulfilled when he said the word of truth, which is what actually happened.

“The public opinion has the right to know who used the threat method against our lofty judiciary, in a failed attempt to dissuade him from telling the truth. It will not succeed in any case, and Counselor Sultan Buresli has proven that Kuwait’s loyal people are still its hope, and that all of Kuwait is behind them, supporting them; waiting for the file of this case to be completed, and for the curtain to be drawn on the final chapter of a case, the perpetrators of which tried to obscure it using cheap and unacceptable methods.

“What happened in this file is an affirmation of the saying, “A right never dies with demands behind it,” and that an impartial judiciary, with its loyal Kuwaiti judges, will lead the country to the correct and fair path at this important juncture in the history of Kuwait.”

Also:

“All wars begin with major features in newspapers and prominent headlines in news bulletins, then they begin to move to the bottom of the page, and appear as a second or third item in the news, so that war, any war, after a while becomes a regular matter, regardless of its developments and the pain of those subjected to its madness, bombing, and fire,” columnist **Suad Fahd Al-Mojil** wrote for **Al-Qabas** daily.

“Muhammad Hassanein Heikal reflects on his experiences as a journalist covering wars, acknowledging the profound influence of journalist Scott Watson, a leftist intellectual shaped by the Spanish Civil War.

“Heikal recounts his own wartime experiences during World War II in El Alamein, Egypt, admitting that working as a war correspondent fascinated him.

“However, he also describes the grim realization that war, at its core, represents a cycle of human tragedy, where conflicts escalate to violence when reason fails.

“Heikal emphasizes the disparity between the theoretical presentation of war in the media, devoid of blood or body parts, and the harsh reality experienced by those under its fire. He argues that war can never be perceived as normal except by distant observers.

“The author condemns the alarming normalization of wars, where conflicts become routine or are justified, as seen in the aftermath of the September 11 events with the “war on terrorism.” He criticizes the moral claims of superiority made by the Zionist entity and questions the global adoption of

the “fighting terrorism” logic, pointing out its role in justifying atrocities in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Libya, and other regions.

“Heikal asserts that people may lack the power to prevent such wars but can serve as effective tools for exposing injustice and spreading information overlooked by mainstream media. He highlights the role of social media in changing the narrative during the Gaza war, revealing hidden truths and challenging the false narrative of the “war on terrorism.”

“In conclusion, Heikal warns against the dangerous normalization of war and the “war on terrorism,” cautioning that the flames of conflict, once ignited, do not recognize borders. He underscores the need to reject the idea of war becoming a habit and to question the merit of the “war on terrorism” as it can have far-reaching consequences beyond the initial conflict zone.”

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“Stop the dripping! The rain stopped for us and there is neither power nor strength except in God, the Most High, the Great. O servants of God, seek help. Perhaps, God Almighty will have mercy on us and help us,” columnist **Talal Al Saeed** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“The rain stopped for us, yet there has been no command to pray for rain. Not a single Friday preacher raised his hands to the sky until his armpits went out, asking the Almighty Creator for relief and to assure the worshippers. Perhaps, God Almighty will respond if at the end of an official sermon, which represents the ‘Awqaf’s’ point of view and broadcasted live on official television, we heard the Imam uttering, ‘O God, give us rain and do not destroy us.’

“Imams have deep enmity between them and against Kuwait despite everything the government offers to them. None of them takes the initiative to pray for Kuwait. Imams are expatriates who pray for their countries, but do not pray for our country. Their excuse is that they are waiting for an official directive from the Ministry of Endowments. As for the initiatives, they do not know the way!

“Perhaps, God will have mercy on us if you ask for help. We are living in political chaos, in which the government and legislature are involved, without meaning or justification, such as pardoning those who do not deserve pardon, leaving those who deserve pardon behind bars, questionable appointments due to which they were unfairly treated, and confusion in taking decisions. May God replace the government with something better, until a firm Amiri decree is issued to abolish it due to rampant corruption. This is in addition to the lack of help.

“Oh God, be kind to our kneeling old women, our infant children, and our poor livestock. Help us, O Helper, and do not make us despondent ... Amen.”

— Compiled by Mai Elsoukary

Hopes rekindled for opening ‘Darwaza’ tunnel after 3 yrs

MPW, contractor reach deal



File photo: Digging underway at the site.



The duo with contraband.

Duo held with drugs

By Mansour Al-Sultan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

Patrolmen supporting the Jahra Security Directorate referred two young men in their thirties to the General Administration for Drug Control after they were caught yesterday evening in the Jahra area in a state of drug use and in possession of narcotic substances and abuse tools.

The suspects, both in their 30s, were caught at a checkpoint. Police searched them and seized from them narcotic pills, narcotic chemicals, and drug paraphernalia.

Parking license not renewed

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Kuwait Municipality has rejected the request of the Public Facilities Management Company to renew the license for a parking area in Sharq, reports **Al-Qabas** daily.

According to the Municipality, the parking area is located behind the headquarters of the Public Authority for Minors Affairs (PAMA) in Block Two, Sharq; indicating that the non-renewal of the license is due to the parking area’s overlap with the boundaries of the Cultural, Recreational and Educational Center project.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport (PART) is in the process of drafting a letter granting approval to the contractor responsible for the maintenance work on Al-Abdul Razzaq Darwaza tunnel, reports Al-Rai daily.

This approval is a crucial step in completing the contract work, with the ultimate goal of reopening the intersection, which has remained closed for approximately three years.

Mechanism

Reliable sources in the Ministry of Public Works told Al-Rai, the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, along with the Minister of Public Works, Dr. Jassim Al-Ostad, held a meeting with PART officials, the purpose of which was to discuss the mechanism for finalizing the maintenance work, during which an agreement was reached with the contractor regarding the specific tasks to be completed.

It is worth noting that the former Minister of Public Works, Amani Bouqammaz, took the decision to halt the work on the tunnel approximately a year ago.

This decision was taken pending the resolution of a dispute related to tunnel work after a specialist at the Government Performance Center submitted a report.

The report asserted that the implementation mechanism for tunnel repairs was incorrect and posed a danger. The project contractor team, however, contended that the ongoing works were executed correctly, following a thoroughly studied plan, and argued against the necessity of stopping them.

New dept eyed to check ‘electronics shops’ sales

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) intends to establish a new department in the commercial control and consumer protection sector, specialized in following up on electronics stores, as the new year starts, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The sources added that this section will be concerned with receiving consumer complaints, and will also be concerned with licenses related to electronics stores and advertisements for offers and discounts that are published on the social media.

The sources pointed out that the importance of this new section lies in the possibility of the Ministry’s commercial inspector visiting the store or the owners of these stores that sell their products via social media in the event consumers file a complaint to the Ministry.

The sources pointed out that the Ministry will establish this new section in cooperation with Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), especially since there is an agreement and memorandum of understanding concluded between the ministry and CITRA regarding the provision of services for blocking and unblocking electronic content, which aims to clarify the nature, scope and requirements of the services provided by the Authority related to blocking or unblocking electronic content, lifting the block on social media accounts, websites and electronic applications, determining the expected level of service for each category.

The sources clarified the ministry’s responsibilities and the requirements for the procedures followed when requesting to block or lift the block on electronic content, and documenting the responsibilities of all parties participating in the agreement.

Other Voices

All I know is I don’t know anything

By Ahmad alsarraf

The title of the article echoes the wisdom attributed to the philosopher Socrates, who reportedly passed away on February 15, 399 BCE. This quote, considered one of the most renowned in Western philosophy, has far-reaching implications.

It underscores the idea that true certainty is elusive even in our most personal beliefs, as doubt has historically been the driving force behind significant discoveries and inventions.

In the grand scope of human history, the word “doubt” stands out as a powerful catalyst for progress. Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher, aptly observes that fools and fanatics are often overly confident, while wise individuals are characterized by a healthy dose of doubt. While the human inclination to seek certainty is natural, it can be viewed as an intellectual vice that impedes intellectual progress.

Ironically, the only genuine wisdom lies in acknowledging that we know nothing. The process of learning and growth is hindered if one believes they already possess all the knowledge they need. The key is to maintain an open mind and a mindset that welcomes the possibility of discovering something

new at any given moment.

While some find Socrates’ statement seemingly contradictory, it actually encompasses multiple layers, showcasing the depth of Greek philosophy. The acknowledgment that one doesn’t know something is often more valuable than drawing incorrect conclusions.

The wisdom suggests that continuous development and learning are essential for personal and intellectual growth. Progress often involves feeling lost and uncertain, but this discomfort is crucial for expanding one’s personality and mind.

In life, great accomplishments and knowledge are not acquired effortlessly. When individuals believe they know everything about their craft, job, or skill, it signals a potential downfall, as true understanding is a dynamic process that requires ongoing learning and adaptation.

In essence, no one possesses all-encompassing knowledge, and the pursuit of continuous learning should be embraced.

Throughout history, no individual, society, or nation has sustained progress solely through faith, wealth, or military power; true resilience lies in knowledge. The understanding that one doesn’t know everything, coupled with a perpetual quest for knowledge, is the path to enduring success.

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e-mail: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

Host robbed by guest at ‘farm’

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: A Kuwaiti citizen born in 1999, has filed a report with the Al-Mutla’a Police Station accusing a person of stealing his iPhone 14. He gave only the first name of the alleged thief, but no other details, reports **Al-Anba** daily. He said the theft occurred when he hosted the suspect at his farmhouse in the vicinity of the pilgrims’ rest house. The informant said the stolen phone is blue color and has a storage capacity of 256 GB. The detectives were looking for the suspect.

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No one injured: The Grand Naseem Roundabout in the Jahra Governorate witnessed an accident in which the motorist lost control of the vehicle and collided with the road divider, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The accident did not cause any injuries to the vehicle’s driver, but the traffic was disrupted until police removed the car from the road.

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Jurassic wells: The Kuwait Oil Company has obtained the approval of the Central Agency for Public Tenders for awarding an important contract for Jurassic wells, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

The oil sources said the contract is for security and safety improvements and the supervisory control and data collection system for Jurassic wells in northern Kuwait. The sources stated that the contract was awarded to the Heavy Engineering Industries and Shipbuilding Company for 15.8 million dinars.

3 beggars, delivery boys arrested

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Residency Affairs Investigation Department in the Ministry of Interior conducted a series of security campaigns over the weekend in Mahboula, Farwaniya, Khaitan, Salmiya, Ardiya and Amghara; resulting in the arrest of 241 people of various nationalities who violated the Residency and Labor laws, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

In a press statement, the ministry revealed that those arrested included three beggars, 44 expatriates working in delivery companies, 26 daily workers and eight women in fake domestic labor recruitment offices.

All those arrested were referred to the concerned authorities.

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Computer parts stolen: Police are looking for an unknown person who allegedly climbed over the wall of a school, entered the school premises and stole computer parts, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The assistant principal of a secondary school in Sulaibikhat has filed a report at the Sulaibikhat police station.

A team of forensic experts have lifted fingerprints from the computer room. Investigations are ongoing to arrest the culprit.

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PAHW distributes draw cards of govt plots in South Saad Al-Abdullah City

Housing authority completes more than 25K transactions in Nov

By Abdul Nasser Al-Aslami
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW)'s Citizen Service Department completed 25,781 transactions in November, including 256 new housing applications, and conducted 1,386 allocation transactions.

According to statistics issued by

PAHW, the Citizen Service Department conducted 436 exchange and transfer transactions in the same month and 265 documentation transactions, and opened 316 new files related to rented housing.

The Reception Department submitted 289 rental allowance transactions, and 283 "To whom it may concern" certificates.

The telephone customer service in the communications department received a total of 2,353 direct calls from the public in the month of November.

The Statistical and Follow-up Department submitted 100 petitions to PAHW's Applications and Allocation Sector, and the Distribution and Documentation Sector.

It is worth highlighting that the total

number of transactions submitted through the website was 24, and the total number of services completed through the Sahel app was 19,960.

Meanwhile, the PAHW announced that it would distribute reserve cards for the lottery of government plots in South Saad Al-Abdullah City, the sixth batch of the N4 suburb, Dec 11, at the PAHW's hall until the reserve cards run out.

In a press statement, PAHW explained that the total number of reserve cards is 225 cards. The distribution priority will be for those allocated to them until Dec 31, 2005 and before. The concerned citizens were asked to bring the original civil card of the person concerned in addition to the allocation decision.

If the person concerned is unable to receive the lottery entry card (primary

and reserve) or attend the lottery himself, he can delegate through the Citizen Service Department at the PAHW headquarters or its outside branches, or a special power of attorney from the Ministry of Justice indicating the type of transaction and the specified region. There is a special power of attorney for all of the PAHW's transactions listed on the Ministry of Justice system.

Top experts to participate in KHF-hosted Gulf Heart Societies event

Mubarak Abdulaziz health center in Hateen to operate 24/7

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Kuwait Heart Foundation (KHF) announced that it will host the 15th Conference of the Gulf Heart Societies for a period of four days from December 13 to December 16, with the participation of an elite group of regional and international medical competencies.

According to the Secretary-General of KHF Dr. Rashid Al-Awaish, the foundation is hosting this conference because of its great importance in improving the health services provided in the country. It will discuss the latest findings of specialized research in the field of heart diseases.

He highlighted the importance of the conference for exchanging experiences and information between specialists, and knowing



Dr Rashid Al-Awaish



Dr Fahad Al-Hajri

the modern methods and various medical skills.

Dr. Al-Awaish stressed the need for conducting periodic medical check-ups to help in early detection of diseases, especially diabetes and high blood pressure.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the conference Dr. Fahad Al-Hajri said the conference will address several scientific topics about heart diseases and coronary arteries.

He explained that workshops will be organized within the conference

activities, including an advanced cardiac ultrasound workshop, a first aid workshop, and an electrocardiogram workshop.

Also, scientific sessions have been prepared to discuss the latest methods and diseases related to the heart, including heart catheterization, valve diseases, heart failure, and artificial intelligence. A course on diagnosing heart and arterial diseases, and a course on medical imaging, including MRI and CT scan, in diagnosing heart diseases will be held as part of the conference.

It will also witness a discussion about the latest treatments and scientific recommendations for some diseases, such as the link between tumors and heart disease, and myocardial hypertrophy.

It will host the Head of the Adult and Pediatric Cardiology Department at Cleveland Clinic Ohio Hospital in America Dr. Hani Najm as the keynote speaker at the conference.

Dr. Al-Hajri revealed that an awareness day will be held for the public on Saturday from 5:00pm to 9:00pm at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in order to raise awareness about the importance of early detection of chronic non-communicable diseases.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health announced the inclusion of the Mubarak Abdulaziz Al-Hasawi Health Center in Hateen in the list of centers that operate around the clock in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Health Zone.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Health explained that the center started operating around the clock on Sunday, and it will continue to operate throughout the week, and on holidays and vacations, just like the Salam Health Centers and Adan Specialized Health Centers.



Zain's team at the company's booth.



Large crowds attend the 10th season of Qout Market.

Company supports homegrown talents

Zain main partner of 10th 'Qout Market'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: In yet another step to encourage Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and support unique homegrown projects, Zain has announced its return as a Main Partner of Qout Market in its latest season. The popular community event, which celebrated its 10th year, focuses on promoting locally made food products, artisanal crafts, and farm produce. Huge crowds attended the latest season's inaugural gathering at the outdoor area of Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC).

Zain is proud to be among the first supporters of this initiative throughout the past years. The event has had a huge success in the past, having gathered families, young people, and other members of the community in a wonderful atmosphere with a special focus on supporting local products and talents.

Zain was keen on coming back as a Main Partner to support Qout Market's 10th season under its strategic efforts to empower Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and local startups. By supporting such unique initiatives, the company reflects its belief in the capabilities of local business owners in effectively contributing to the national economy.

As it does every year, Zain was present at Qout Market through its dedicated booth, where it welcomed scores of visitors, families, and children for many entertaining programs. The company has set up various interactive activities and created a special atmosphere to closely connect with community members, where it reflected the values of its brand "Zain A Wonderful World."

Since being founded in 2013, Qout Market's vision has always centered around attracting, empowering, and shedding light on homegrown talents and projects. The market succeeded in creating a quality platform to encourage community members to discover local products, communicate with each other, and share ideas and experiences.

Qout Market focuses on farm produce, artisanal crafts, and locally made food products, and participants are selected based on several quality standards. The event's main mission is to create a vibrant platform for local business owners to connect with the community, exchange ideas with customers, and grow their businesses. In its previous seasons, it welcomed over 30,000 visitors per market day.

Adjusting of fees key modification

Al-Aiban issues decision to amend top regulations tied to auditing profession

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Al-Aiban, has issued Ministerial Decision No. 183 of 2023, amending Ministerial Decision No. 13 of 2020 pertaining to the executive regulations for the law governing the practice of the auditing profession, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The key modification involves adjusting the fees applicable for registration and license issuance to practice the auditing profession.

Specifically, the resolution replaces the text of Article 2 of the Executive Regulations of the Law on Practicing the Profession of Auditors. It outlines the revised fees as follows:

Registration application fees: 200 dinars; License issuance fees: 150 dinars; License renewal fees: 200 dinars; Change of address fees: 60 dinars; Replacement of a lost license fees: 60 dinars; Registration test fees for each subject: 50 dinars; Appeal of registration test result for one subject: 50 dinars; Certificate for passing the registration test: 20 dinars; Application to appoint an external auditor: 300 dinars; Certification fees: 30 dinars; "To Whom It May Concern" certificate: 20 dinars; Fees for changing the name of the auditor's office: 60 dinars; Complaint against auditors fees: 60 dinars; Temporary suspension of auditors' license fees: 60 dinars and Permanent suspension/cancellation of auditors' license fees: 60 dinars.

Additionally, Ministerial Resolution No. 182 of 2023, issued by Minister Al-Aiban, involves adding two commercial activities to the Unified Guide for Classification of Economic Activities in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

These activities are related to com-

Kuwait sends 38th relief plane to Gaza

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): The 38th Kuwait relief plane for the Gaza Strip left to Al-Arish, Egypt on Monday, carrying 10 tons of humanitarian aid and three ambulances organized by Al-Salam Society for Humanitarian and Charitable Works, in partnership with the International Islamic Charitable Organization and the Ayat Charitable Society.

Deputy Director General of Al-Salam Charitable Society, Hamad Al-Aoun, affirmed to KUNA that the value of the amounts disbursed to date for relief in the Gaza Strip via the Kuwaiti air bridge exceeded USD three million and 450,000.

Al-Aoun said that the relief aid came at the request of the Palestinian Red Crescent, especially in light of the severe decrease in all aspects of services and various materials in the Strip.

community health clinics and traditional and complementary medicine centers, both under the supervision of the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, the resolution amends the names of five commercial activities related to the health sector.

Moreover, the Ministerial Resolution No. 181 of 2023, also issued by Minister Al-Aiban, establishes fees of 20 dinars for issuing a real estate broker's identity, while a renewal will cost 10 dinars.

Additionally, the resolution specifies a fee of 30 dinars for replacing a lost identity. The resolution takes effect upon its publication in the Official Gazette (Kuwait Al-Youm).



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HH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister send similar cables

HH the Amir expresses sorrow over Tanzania floods’ victims

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Monday a cable of condolences to Tanzania’s President Samia Suluhu Hassan over the victims of the floods that swept the Manyara Region in northern Tanzania.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished a speedy recovery to the wounded, expressed solace over the souls of the victims and hoped

that the Tanzanian people would overcome this natural disaster.

Several people died and others sustained injuries, while some were reported missing due to the floods and rains, which also caused damage to public utilities and properties.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to President Samia Suluhu Hassan over the victims of the floods that

engulfed the Manyara region.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished a speedy recovery to the wounded, praying to Allah the Almighty to bestow His mercy upon souls of the victims and for recovery of the missing.

Also, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to President Samia Suluhu Hassan over the victims of the floods.

First phase of medical campus project being inaugurated

‘1st teaching hospital’ to have 700 beds capacity

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Sabah Al-Salem University has begun inaugurating the medical campus project in Sabah Al-Salem University City, the first phase, “design”, with the start of implementing the project during the next four years, after it was included in the government’s work program for the next phase, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The medical campus, with an area of 958,092.48 square meters, includes the first teaching hospital in Kuwait with a capacity of 700 beds in coordination with the Ministry of Health, in addition to the five medical colleges (Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Allied Medical Sciences, and Public Health).

The Kuwaiti community is awaiting the project to support and develop the educational process in the State of Kuwait, especially the medical and health sector, which is compatible with development priorities and modern global developments, especially in light of what the world is witnessing of the increasing need for medical specialties.



Photo by Rizk Taufiq

Bird’s eye view of the hospital.

The importance of the project lies in providing the latest technologies in the fields of scientific research, and expanding academic programs that serve the needs of the labor market, to advance the level of Kuwait University’s academic performance, and to raise the level of university education, as it is a policy within the policies of the development plan of

the State of Kuwait.

The new medical campus contributes to increasing the number of students enrolled in medical specialties beyond what currently exists due to the spatial spaces available in the project, as well as encouraging research and studies in medical and health sciences and technology.

CSC announces

Continued from Page 1

CSC said Monday on its official account on X platform, previously known as Twitter, that official work would resume on Tuesday, January second, 2024.

It indicated that agencies with a special nature of work must determine their schedule according to what works best for the public interest.

Deputy speaker

Continued from Page 1

The committee tasked to tackle issues included in the grilling motion of MP Dawoud Maarefi against former Minister of Public Works Amani Bugamaz met with the Ministry of Public Works undersecretary, assistant undersecretary for Roads Maintenance Affairs and secretary of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART).

The Human Resources Development Committee discussed five bills on the nationalization of jobs in the public sector, its assignment to investigate factors leading to the increasing number of letters from public institutions to nominate officials, and fake recruitment in some private companies with the aim of manipulating the condition to hire a certain number of citizens. Representatives of the CSC, Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) and SAB attended the meeting.

The Financial and Economic Affairs Committee discussed the bill on amending Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) Law No. 61/1976 in order to add an article on allowing retirees to obtain a loan equal to a quarter of their 28 months pension. This loan shall be paid in installments of KD60 per month if the pension is less than KD1,000 per month. If the pension is higher than KD1,000; the monthly installment is equal to five percent of the pension. The bill stipulates that a retiree can avail this privilege only once and any unpaid installments will be waived in case the borrower dies before paying the loan in full.

The committee also deliberated on the bills about increasing the cost of living allowance of citizens. Representatives of the Ministry of Finance, CSC and PIFSS attended the meeting.

‘Explorer’ high-

Continued from Page 1

talks to push harder for an end to fossil fuels.

Time seems to be running out both in the talks in Dubai and for action that could keep warming at or below the internationally agreed-upon threshold.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres returned to the summit on Monday and said it was “time to go into overdrive, to negotiate in good faith, and rise to the challenge.” He said negotiators at the COP28 summit in particular must focus on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and climate justice.

He said the global stocktake - the part of talks that assesses where the world is at with its climate goals and how it can reach them - should “phase out all fossil fuels” in order to reach the goal of limiting the rise of global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) compared with pre-industrial times. That phase-out was, he said, “a central aspect” for the summit to be considered a success.

“We can’t keep kicking the can down the road,” Guterres said in brief

remarks. “We are out of road and almost out of time.”

“What is very clear is that the bar for success is high,” said EU Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra. “And that is not because these Europeans say so, or because small islands say so, or Africa or Latin America say so. But because scientists tell us that we have no alternative if we want to keep future generations safe.”

Delegates were still waiting on a new text on Monday afternoon.

“Why hasn’t the text arrived? Because it is difficult,” said Dan Jørgensen, Denmark’s minister of climate policy. “Hopefully at this COP, we will also be able to make the political decisions making this transition real so that we can stay below 1.5 degrees.”

Just after 3 p.m., COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber walked out with an entourage and headed for an electric cart while speaking on the phone. He was asked if delegates were getting close to a final text. He didn’t respond, but smiled, waved and gave a thumbs up to an Associated Press journalist before being driven off.

Earlier Monday, Emirati officials cancelled a hastily called news conference with al-Jaber, then cancelled another with another official in the early afternoon. They offered no explanation for the cancellations, which drew into question an earlier promise by al-Jaber to bring the COP to an end sharply at 11 a.m. Tuesday. They were part of a series of cancellations by prominent negotiators.

Guterres brought back up the concept of a two-track phase-down of fossil fuels between wealthy nations acting faster and harder and giving more time and money to poorer countries. Other negotiators, including Norway’s Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, have also floated the idea, but it hasn’t been prominent in negotiating texts.

Activists responded with skepticism of the plan.

Nnimmo Bassey, a longtime Nigerian environmental activist, said that the ultimate goal should be for “fossil fuels to be kept in the ground” as Indigenous communities around the world have often borne the cost of oil exploration.

“We can’t keep on running the tap while pretending we’re mopping the floor,” Bassey said. “We have to turn off the taps.”

The presidency of the conference - run by al-Jaber, who’s CEO of the United Arab Emirates national oil company - “recognizes that for this to be viewed as a success, we need to find some agreement on fossil fuels,” said Steven Guilbeault, Canadian environment minister and one of eight super-negotiators tasked with helping find common ground. “I think if we can’t do that, people will see this as a failure, even though we’ve agreed on lots of other good things.”

But Guilbeault said, “I’m confident we can finish tomorrow.”

Simon Stiell, the executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, told journalists Monday morning that the “climate wolves” remained at the world’s doors as negotiations reach their climax at the summit.

“We do not have a minute to lose in this crucial final stretch and none of us have had much sleep,” Stiell said. “One thing is for certain: I win, you lose is a recipe for collective failure,” he said.

Negotiators from powerhouses United States and China were working together Monday morning.

But there were signs of trouble all around.

Sticking points for the global stocktake are along familiar lines. Many countries, including small island states, European countries and Latin American nations, are calling for a phase-out of fossil fuels, responsible for most of the warming on Earth. But other nations want weaker language

that will allow oil, gas and coal to keep burning in some way.

One of the major players in all this is India, which in 2021 torpedoed the idea of a “phase-out” of coal but then in 2022 proposed the idea of phasing out all fossil fuels, not just coal, which never got on the agenda in last year’s climate talks. It’s now the center point of discussion.

The world’s most populous nation, and No. 3 carbon dioxide emitter, is trying to be both ambitious yet keep the backbone of its economy, coal, said Vaibhav Chaturvedi of New Delhi-based Council on Energy, Environment and Water.

Alden Meyer, an analyst with climate think tank E3G, said Saudi Arabia was trying to mobilize the other members of the OPEC oil cartel to object to any inclusion of fossil fuels in the text - which he said would violate the terms of the Paris climate accord. “This could be a very long week,” he said.

Canada’s Guilbeault said OPEC countries are “being very unwilling to even contemplate even a conversation, and I think that’s unhelpful.”

Joseph Sikulu, a Pacific climate warrior who was protesting outside of Guterres’ briefing, said, “we know that on the inside of the negotiations the high exploiting countries like the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Australia, are the ones who are blocking on the phase out of fossil fuels.”

Iraq moves

Continued from Page 1

Washington’s sanctions waivers to buy electricity from Iran, and since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iraq’s foreign currency reserves have been housed at the U.S. Federal Reserve, giving the Americans significant control over Iraq’s supply of dollars.

Al-Sudani’s predecessors also had to walk a delicate line between Tehran and Washington, but the Israel-Hamas war has considerably upped the stakes.

Since the onset of the war on Oct. 7, at least 84 attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria have been claimed by an umbrella group of Iran-backed Iraqi militants dubbed the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. The militants say their attacks are in retaliation for Washington’s backing of Israel and its military presence in Iraq and Syria.

Al-Sudani has condemned the attacks and U.S. counter-strikes as a violation of his country’s sovereignty. He also ordered authorities to pursue militants involved in the attacks, most of which did not cause injuries or major damage. His office declined further comment.

Washington has sent messages that its patience is wearing thin.

After the embassy attack, the Pentagon said that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin “made clear (to al-Sudani) that attacks against U.S. forces must stop.”

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told al-Sudani that Washington expects Iraqi officials to take more action to prevent such attacks, and believes they have the capability to do so, a U.S. official told The Associated Press.

During a recent trip to the region, CIA Director William Burns warned al-Sudani of “harsh consequences” if Iraq does not act to stop the attacks, an Iraqi official said.

The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with briefing regulations.

In a call with the Iraqi premier earlier this month, Blinken said that the Americans would take matters into their own hands, arguing that Baghdad had not done enough to pursue the perpetrators, according to two Iraqi officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

‘KPC embroils in thorny issue of collecting dues from MEW’

‘No agreement in place regarding the matter’

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The continued failure of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation to collect revenues from its fuel sales to the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy is considered a thorny and recurring matter over the past years, as there is no agreement to collect these dues and there are no procedures that have been laid down to ensure the accuracy of the quantity readings between all parties to avoid shortfalls and deficiencies, reports Al-Anba daily.

The KPC says the largest part of the debt, equivalent to 89% of the total balance due in the fiscal year 2022/2023, relates to the corporation’s sales of imported liquefied natural gas, and the point of disagreement was the inclusion of the operational and capital costs of the permanent facilities for importing gas from Al-Zour.

The KPC is said to have held several coordination meetings between all concerned parties to resolve the issue and reach an agreement, but the issue was submitted to the Council of Ministers, which issued its decision based on the meeting of the Economic Affairs Committee, which stipulated the need to return the issue to the Ministry of Electricity and Water for coordination with the Ministry of Finance, the KPC and the Fatwa and Legislation Department to study the issued from all aspects.

Agreed

On the other hand, it was agreed between the KPC and the Ministry of Electricity and Water that invoices for imported liquefied gas would be issued after separating the non-agreed costs until a decision is made on those costs, in order to prevent the accumulation of debts but no invoice was paid until the end of the fiscal 2022/2023.

Last July, the KPC addressed the Ministry of Electricity regarding the payment of gas sales bills and inquired about the procedures that had been taken by them to implement the Council of Ministers’ decision regarding coordination with the Ministry of Finance, KPC and the Fatwa and Legislation Department for further study regarding capital and operational costs.

What makes the issue important to KPC is the constant inquiries from the regulatory authorities, most notably the Audit Bureau, which monitored during the last fiscal year the KPC claims of 2.4 billion dinars as of March 31, 2023 from the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

The Audit Bureau records annual observations on KPC delay in collecting claims, in contravention of Clause No. 11 of Annex No. 6 of the agreement concluded with the ministry to supply it with fuel, which stipulates that the KPC shall issue its invoices in US dollars and send

‘Find alternative place for camels’

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Head of the Kuwait Society for Livestock and Food Security Jamal Al-Wasidi says, “There will not be any removal of the camel enclosures located in the South Saad Al-Abdullah housing project before an alternative place is found for them, based on a previous agreement between activists from the market users and the Kuwait Municipality”, reports Al-Seyassah.

In a press statement, he explained that, “The enclosures will ignite the situation among several parties in the project. They will be one of the obstacles.

“It is unreasonable for livestock breeders to incur the costs and losses of transporting their camels from one location to another every period. It is unacceptable for them to remain in a state of permanent instability and face the constant threat of removal due to the failure in allocating a fixed and permanent location for them.”

Al-Wasidi expressed his hope that this issue will be solved as soon as possible.

Kuwait, the Palestinian cause – last part

2013 (May 1): Kuwait declares that part of its voluntary financial aid for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is allocated for the UN office in East Jerusalem.

2013 (June 10): Kuwait delivers material aid to the union of health care committees in Gaza.

2014 (March 25): Kuwait affirms at onset of the Arab summit that just peace can only be attained through establishing the independent Palestinian state.

2014 (April 30): Kuwait affirms its commitment to maintain material, moralistic and political support for the Palestinian people until end of the Israeli occupation and establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

2014 (July 15): Kuwait declares, during an emergency meeting of the Arab foreign ministers to discuss Gaza, donating USD 10 million for the Palestinian brothers.

2014 (July 25): Kuwait Red Crescent Society delivers in a series of tranches relief supplies to the Palestinians in Gaza.

2014 (August 9): The KRCS delivers medical assistance to the Palestinian Red Crescent for relay to hospitals in Gaza.

2014 (August 25): A convoy of 25 truckloads of humanitarian materials provided by Kuwait enters Gaza in the aftermath an Israeli aggression.

2014 (September 12): The KRCS distributes 7,000 food parcels to Palestinian families in need in Gaza.

2014 (September 14): First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah arrives in Ramallah, the West Bank, on the first such mission by a senior Kuwaiti official.

2014 (September 24): Kuwait affirms, during an Arab ministerial meeting held on margins of a session of the UNGA, it will continue to support the Palestinian people.

2014 (September 25): Kuwait renews its call upon the UNSC to undertake its responsibilities to protect Palestinian people and territories as stipulated by the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention.

2014 (November 25): Kuwait renews full support for struggle of the Palestinian people for attaining their legitimate right of establishing an independent state on their territories with East Jerusalem as its capital and setting a timetable for ending the Israeli occupation.

2015 (November 13): Kuwait affirms during a UN commission session its unwavering backing for the Palestinian people’s struggle until attaining all their legitimate rights.

2016 (March 7): Kuwait affirms its pledge to continue backing the Palestinian cause during the fifth extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit on Palestine.

2016 (October 19): Kuwait asserts

the dire need that the UNSC undertake its role to stop deterioration of the conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories.

2017 (October 16): National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem calls during a conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Russia for ordering the Israeli delegation leave the conference hall in response to the Israeli practices against the Palestinian people.

2018 (May 15): Kuwait calls during a UNSC session upon nations to recognize the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

2018 (May 18): Kuwait submits a draft resolution to the UNSC urging for protection of the Palestinian people.

2018 (November 18): Kuwait allocates USD 50 million worth of contribution to the Palestinian Authority’s budget.

2019 (March 31): The late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirms during the Arab Summit held in Tunisia that there will be no global stability in absence of a just settlement to the Palestinian cause.

2019 (June 20): Kuwait demands during a UNSG session an immediate cessation of all illegal settlement activities by the Israeli occupation authorities in the Palestinian territories.

2020 (February 5): The National Assembly decries and rejects an American plan for the Palestinian cause dubbed “the deal of the century.”

2020 (October 27): Kuwait affirms during a UNSC session that the Palestinian question is a central cause for the Arab nation.

2021 (October 23): Kuwait calls for bringing Israel to account for its continuous violations of the Palestinian people’s rights.

2022 (November 11): Kuwait affirms during a UNGA session its unwavering stand of supporting the Palestinian cause.

2023 (February 12): Kuwait expresses condemnation, during the Jerusalem conference held in Cairo, of all unilateral measures undertaken by the Israeli occupation forces, intended to alter the historic status of Jerusalem.

2023 (July 27): Kuwait appeals to the International Court of Justice in the Hague to rule against the continuing Israeli occupation’s breaches of the Palestinian people’s rights.

2023 (October 20): Kuwait calls during a GCC-ASEAN meeting held in Saudi Arabia on the international community to protect the Palestinians.

2023 (October 21): Kuwait affirms during the Cairo Peace Summit its rejection for displacing the Palestinian people.

them to the ministry, provided that the ministry is committed to paying invoices in full within 30 days from

the date of receipt of the invoice without any objection, claim, or deduction.

CAMP FOR SALE

Sinopec Fifth Construction Company is offering a fully-equipped camp near Mina Alzour for sale. This comprehensive package includes portable cabins, light poles, dining facilities, toilets, underground utilities, and all materials- everything except the generator and control room.

Key Details:

- Bidding Type: Sealed bid, Deadline: December 20, 2023, at 1:30 PM
- Evaluation Criteria: Highest bidder
- Site Evaluation: Interested parties are welcome to participate in a site visit scheduled for December 17, 2023, from 9 AM to 3 PM to evaluate the facilities. Please provide your details via email to the addresses below
- Payment: Successful bidders are required to transfer the bid amount to Sinopec Fifth Construction Company’s account within 7 days.

Terms & Conditions:

- Successful bidder shall restore the land to its original condition within 3 months after clearing of site.
- The buyer shall submit a performance guarantee of 100,000 KWD within 7 days from the effective date of the contract.
- The guarantee shall be transferred to the designated account by bank transfer, Cash or bank guarantees shall not be accepted. If the performance bond is not submitted, all materials cannot be pulled out of the camp gate or released. The performance guarantee will be returned after 45 days from the date of issuance of the completion certificate.
- The buyer fails to completely cleanup the materials within the prescribed time or fails to fulfill contractual obligations, we shall have the right to terminate the transaction and require the buyer to pay a penalty of 10% of the total contract amount or deduct from the performance guarantee.

Contact details:

Send your interest to Mr. Wang Bo 306074363@qq.com, Mr. Zhang Kai, 537521394@qq.com and Mr. Xia Wei, xavier965@163.com. Contact Number: +965-6071162

Qualified bidders will be promptly contacted.

World News Roundup

Europe

‘Ready, Steady, Go!’

Poland begins delayed ‘transition’ to a centrist

WARSAW, Poland, Dec 11, (AP): A power transition began Monday in the Polish parliament, where the outgoing national conservative leaders made their farewell statements as a majority of lawmakers prepared to elect a new prime minister, the centrist, pro-EU political veteran **Donald Tusk**.

The power transition comes two months since Poles turned out in huge numbers to vote for change in a national election. The transition was delayed for weeks by the president, who chose to keep his political allies in office as long as possible.

“READY, STEADY, GO!” tweeted Tusk, who - if all goes as planned - will be chosen as the new prime minister by nighttime.

Szymon Holownia, a former TV showman who leads a party allied with Tusk, became the speaker of parliament last month and has been trying to encourage discipline in the sometimes raucous assembly. “As far as I know, you are not the prime minister, so please leave the podium,” he said firmly on Monday to a former minister from the outgoing ruling party, Law and Justice, which got used to bending the rules during its time in power.

Parliamentary proceedings have ignited widespread curiosity and emotions, leading to a spike in the number of subscribers to the Sejm’s YouTube channel.

A Warsaw cinema which livestreamed Monday’s proceedings drew hundreds of spectators who munched popcorn and erupted in laughter as the outgoing prime minister spoke.

“So many disturbing things took place in the past eight years that I’m not surprised by this joy that it’s over,” said Justyna Lemanska, a young female ad agency employee in the audience.

The change of power in Poland is felt as hugely consequential for the 38 million citizens of the central European nation, where collective anger produced a record-high turnout to replace a government that had been eroding democratic norms.

Sunak under pressure: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak faces one of the toughest weeks of his 13 months in office as he’s grilled by lawyers about his decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic while fending off a rebellion from lawmakers over his signature immigration policy.

Sunak denied taking risks with public health, in response to questions at a public inquiry into Britain’s handling of the pandemic, which left more than 230,000 people in the country dead. Sunak was Treasury chief to Prime Minister Boris Johnson when the coronavirus hit, and backed a discount initiative that encouraged people to go back to restaurants in August 2020 after months of lockdown.

The government’s scientific advisers have told the inquiry they were not informed in advance about the “Eat Out to Help Out” scheme, which scientists have linked to a rise in infections. One senior government science adviser referred to Sunak in a message to colleagues at the time as “Dr. Death.” (AP)

Putin visits a shipyard: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday traveled to a shipyard to attend the commissioning of new nuclear submarines, a visit that showcased the country’s nuclear might amid the fighting in Ukraine.

Putin’s trip to the Sevmash shipyard in Severodvinsk in Russia’s northwestern Archangelsk region comes three days after he declared his intention to seek another six-year term.

Putin announced his decision to run in the March 17 presidential election, which he is all but certain to win, while speaking to soldiers who fought in Ukraine after a Kremlin award ceremony - a setting that underlined his focus on the military action in Ukraine.

Monday’s visit to Sevmash, where Putin oversaw raising the navy’s flag on the newly built Emperor Alexander III and the Krasnoyarsk nuclear submarines, also appeared to emphasize his focus on bolstering Russia’s nuclear forces amid the tensions with the U.S. and other NATO allies over Ukraine. (AP)

Pressure mounts on Hungary: Pressure mounted on Hungary on Monday not to veto the opening of European Union membership talks and the supply of economic aid to war-torn Ukraine at a pivotal EU summit this week, after Prime Minister Viktor Orban demanded that the issue be struck from the agenda.

With tens of billions of dollars in military and economic assistance blocked by Senate Republicans in the United States, Ukraine is desperate to ensure longer-term financial and military assistance as fighting in its almost 2-year war with Russia bogs down.

In a draft of the summit statement seen by The Associated Press, the EU’s leaders will decide to open accession negotiations with Ukraine. But Orban is not backing down. He insists that a “strategic discussion” is needed, given the stalemate on the battlefield and uncertainty about U.S. leadership after elections next year. (AP)

Russia targets Kyiv: A Russian missile attack on Ukraine’s capital early Monday destroyed several homes and left more than 100 households without electricity.

The predawn attack on Kyiv came amid warnings that Russia will step up its attacks on the country’s energy infrastructure as winter sets in with freezing temperatures.

A series of loud explosions followed by air raid sirens broke the silence in Kyiv just after 4 a.m. as the city was under its nightly curfew.

Ukraine’s military said its air defenses intercepted all eight ballistic missiles. However, falling debris from rockets damaged homes on the ground, leaving one person wounded and three others suffering severe shock, officials said. (AP)

UK sends 2 minehunters to Ukraine: Britain is transferring two minehunting ships to Ukraine as part of a package of long-term support to bolster security in the Black Sea, the Ministry of Defense said Monday.

Transfer of the two Sandown class vessels, which are designed to help clear mines from coastal waters, comes as Britain and Norway announce plans for a new maritime coalition to increase support for Ukraine in the war with Russia.

The coalition will work with the Ukrainian navy to expand its forces in the Black Sea, develop a Ukrainian Marine Corps and enhance the use of river patrol craft to defend inland and coastal waterways, British authorities said. (AP)



In this Sept. 21, 2023 file photo, President Joe Biden meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. (AP)

Zelenskyy will meet Biden amid stepped-up push for Congress to approve more aid

President Joe Biden and Ukraine’s leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, will meet at the White House on Tuesday as the U.S. administration steps up the pressure on Congress to provide billions more in aid to Kyiv in its war with Russia.

The visit is intended “to underscore the United States’ unshakable commitment to supporting the people of Ukraine as they defend

themselves against Russia’s brutal invasion,” the White House said in a statement Sunday. “As Russia ramps up its missile and drone strikes against Ukraine, the leaders will discuss Ukraine’s urgent needs and the vital importance of the United States’ continued support at this critical moment.”

Zelenskyy’s office confirmed that he had ac-

cepted Biden’s invitation. He also has been asked to speak to a meeting of all senators.

Biden has asked Congress for a \$110 billion package of wartime funding for Ukraine (\$61.4 billion) and Israel, along with other national security priorities. But the request is caught up in a debate over U.S. immigration policy and border security. (AP)

Politics

Giuliani faces financial fallout in defamation charges

Trump’s trial strategy takes sharp turn

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP): Donald Trump said Sunday he has decided against testifying for a second time at his New York civil fraud trial, posting on social media a day before his scheduled appearance that he “very successfully & conclusively” testified last month and saw no need to do so again.

The former president, the leading contender for the 2024 Republican nomination, had been expected to return to the witness stand Monday as a coda to his defense against New York Attorney General Letitia James’ lawsuit.

James, a Democrat, alleges Trump inflated his wealth on financial statements used in securing loans and making deals. The case threatens Trump’s real estate empire and cuts to the heart of his image as a successful businessman.

“I will not be testifying on Monday,” Trump wrote in an all-capital-letters, multipart statement on his Truth Social platform less than 20 hours before he was to take the witness stand.

“I have already testified to everything & have nothing more to say,” Trump added, leaving the final word among defense witnesses to an accounting expert hired by his legal team who testified last week that he found “no evidence, whatsoever, for any accounting fraud” in Trump’s financial statements.

A Trump spokesperson did not immediately respond to questions about his decision.

The decision was an abrupt change from Trump’s posture in recent days, when his lawyers said he was insistent on testifying again despite their concerns about a gag order that has cost him \$15,000 in fines for disparaging the judge’s law clerk.

“President Trump has already testified. There is really nothing more to say to a judge who has imposed an unconstitutional gag order and thus far appears to have ignored President Trump’s testimony and that of everyone else involved in the complex financial transactions at issue in the case,” Trump lawyer Christopher Kise said Sunday.

Trump’s decision came days after his son, Eric Trump, ditched his return appearance on the witness stand. Trump said on social media that he’d told Eric to cancel.

It also follows Trump’s first trip back to court since he testified in the case on Nov. 6. Last Thursday, he watched from the defense table as the accounting professor, New York University professor Eli Bartov, blasted the state’s case and said Trump’s financial statements “were not materially misstated.”

Cancellation

Trump’s cancellation caught court officials by surprise. Without Trump on the witness stand, the trial will be on hold until Tuesday, when Bartov will finish his testimony. State lawyers say they’ll then call at least one rebuttal witness.

In a statement, James said whether Trump testified again or not, “we have already proven that he committed years of financial fraud and unjustly enriched himself and his family. No matter how much he tries to distract from reality, the facts don’t lie.”

Trump was often defiant and combative when he testified Nov. 6. Along with defending his wealth and denying wrongdoing, he repeatedly sparred with the judge, whom he criticized

as “extremely hostile,” and slammed James as “a political hack.”

Trump answered questions from state lawyers for about 3½ hours, often responding with lengthy diatribes. His verbose answers irked the judge, Arthur Engoron, who admonished, “This is not a political rally.”

Had Trump returned to the stand Monday, it would’ve been his defense lawyers leading the questioning, but lawyers from James’ office could have cross-examined him, too.

Meanwhile, a trial set to get underway in Washington on Monday will determine how much Rudy Giuliani will have to pay to two Georgia election workers who he falsely accused of fraud while pushing Donald Trump’s baseless claims after he lost the 2020 election.

The former New York City mayor has already been found liable in the defamation lawsuit brought by Ruby Freeman and her daughter, Wandrea “Shaye” Moss, who endured threats and harassment after they became the target of a conspiracy theory spread by Trump and his allies. The only issue to be determined at the trial - which will begin with jury selection in Washington’s federal court - is the amount of damages, if any, Giuliani must pay.

The case is among many legal and financial woes mounting for Giuliani, who was celebrated as “America’s mayor” in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack and became one of the most ardent promoters of Trump’s election lies after he lost to President Joe Biden.

Giuliani is also criminally charged alongside Trump and others in the Georgia case accusing them of trying to illegally overturn the results of the election in the state.



Former Mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani arrives at the federal courthouse in Washington, Monday, Dec 11, 2023. The trial will determine how much Giuliani will have to pay to two Georgia election workers who he falsely accused of fraud while pushing President Donald Trump’s baseless claims after he lost the 2020 election. (AP)



Blinken



Romney

America

Blinken defends ammo sale: Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday defended the emergency sale to Israel of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition and also called for quick congressional approval of more than \$100 billion in aid for Israel, Ukraine and other national security priorities.

Blinken said the needs of Israel’s military operations in Gaza justify the rare decision to bypass Congress. “Israel is in combat right now with Hamas,” he said during television interviews. “And we want to make sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself against Hamas.”

The tank ammunition and related support constitute only a small portion of military sales to Israel, Blinken said, and that the rest remains subject to congressional review. “It’s very important that Congress’ voice be heard in this,” he said.

The decision to proceed with the sale of more than \$106 million for tank shells came as the Biden administration’s larger aid package is caught up in a debate over U.S. immigration policy and border security.

Blinken noted that President Joe Biden has said he is willing to make significant compromises to get the aid package moving. “It’s something the president is fully prepared to engage on,” Blinken said.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, said there is bipartisan agreement that something has to be done to address record numbers of migrants crossing into the United States from Mexico. (AP)

Tennessee residents clean up: Residents of central Tennessee communities slammed by deadly tornadoes this weekend described tragic and terrifying scenes in which one mobile home landed on top of another, roofs were ripped from houses and an entire church collapsed during a string of powerful storms that killed six people.

Emergency workers and community members cleaned up Sunday from the severe

weekend storms and tornadoes that also sent dozens more to the hospital while damaging buildings, turning over vehicles and knocking out power to tens of thousands.

Marco Tulio Gabriel Pérez came to Nashville from Atlanta after hearing that his sister and 2-year-old nephew were killed in the

tornado. He said two other children in the family survived with minor injuries. (AP)

Antisemitism denounced: Students, lawmakers and religious leaders joined forces Sunday at a temple in Philadelphia to



Luiz Velazquez, second from right, from Zacatecas, Mexico points to his family as he talks with a member of the U.S. Border Patrol as they join hundreds of migrants gathering along the border Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023, in Lukeville, Ariz. (AP)

strongly denounce antisemitism on college campuses and in their communities.

The gathering at Congregation Rodeph Shalom came one day after University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill resigned amid criticism over her testimony at a congressional hearing. Magill was unable to say under repeated questioning that calls on campus for the genocide of Jews would violate the school’s conduct policy.

“I have seen Pennsylvanians take actions big and small, and both matter, to combat antisemitism,” Gov. Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, said at the event. “I’ve seen it here in Philadelphia where students raised their voices, where students made sure they were heard in the halls of power at their university, and leadership was held accountable.” (AP)

Iowa man arrested: A man has been arrested in the stabbing death of a Catholic priest who was attacked over the weekend in a church rectory in a small Nebraska community, authorities said.

The Rev. Stephen Gutsell was assaulted Sunday “during an invasion” of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, the Archdiocese of Omaha said in a statement.

Gutsell was taken to an Omaha hospital, where he died from his injuries, church officials said. Fort Calhoun, with a population of about 1,000 people, is roughly 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of Omaha. (AP)

Lat/Am

\$45 bln IMF debt looms large

J.Milei warns of ‘painful’ adjustment in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Dec 11, (AP): It wasn’t the most uplifting of inaugural addresses. Rather, Argentina’s newly empowered President Javier Milei presented figures to lay bare the scope of the nation’s economic “emergency,” and sought to prepare the public for a shock adjustment with drastic public spending cuts.

Milei said in his address to thousands of supporters in the capital, Buenos Aires, that the country doesn’t have time to consider other alternatives.

“We don’t have margin for sterile discussions. Our country demands action, and immediate action,” he said. “The political class left the country at the brink of its biggest crisis in history. We don’t desire the



J.Milei

hard decisions that will need to be made in coming weeks, but lamentably they didn’t leave us any option.”

South America’s second largest economy is suffering 143% annual inflation, the currency has plunged and four in 10 Argentines are impoverished. The nation has a yawning fiscal deficit, a trade deficit of \$43 billion, plus a daunting \$45 billion debt to the International Monetary Fund, with

\$10.6 billion due to the multilateral and private creditors by April.

“There’s no money,” is Milei’s common refrain. He repeated it Sunday to explain why a gradualist approach to the situation, which would require financing, was not an option.

But he promised the adjustment would almost entirely affect the state rather than the private sector, and that it represented the first step toward regaining prosperity.

“We know that in the short term the situation will worsen, but soon we will see the fruits of our effort, having created the base for solid and sustainable growth,” he said.

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9 killed in Amazon encampment fire: At least nine people were killed in Brazil’s Amazonian state of Para on Saturday night when a discharge of high-voltage electricity sparked a fire in an encampment of landless workers.

The cause of the discharge was faulty installation of internet wiring, according to a statement from the rural landless workers movement in Para. Three of the company’s employees were killed instantly and a fire raged through the shacks, killing at least six more, the statement said.

Brazil’s President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva dispatched the minister for agrarian development and family agriculture to the municipality of Paraupabas to support affected families. On X, formerly Twitter, Lula also expressed his solidarity for those who perished and were injured.

“We are working to advance in the the restart of agrarian reform, with the identification of available public lands, in order to, after years of paralysis, give work and production opportunities to rural families,” he wrote.

□ □ □

Mine faces partial collapse: A closed rock salt mine belonging to Brazilian petrochemical giant Braskem partially collapsed Sunday in the northeastern coastal city of Maceio, the city’s civil defense authority said.

Video distributed by the authority shows a sudden murky bubbling of the water in the Mundau lagoon in the city’s Mutange neighborhood, reflecting the mine’s rupture.

The area had previously been evacuated and there was no risk to any people, the agency said in a statement. It quoted Mayor João Henrique Caldas as saying the mine was expected to stabilize following the partial collapse.

The development came as no surprise to residents in Maceio, where Braskem’s 40 years of rock salt mining has caused the displacement of tens of thousands of people, hollowing out communities.

The company alerted officials on Nov. 28 of the imminent risk the mine could collapse. Land around the mine had been steadily sinking ever since, falling a total of 2.35 meters (7.7 feet) as of Sunday morning.

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Guyana enters talks with Venezuela: The government of Guyana, under pressure from neighboring Brazil and a Caribbean trading bloc, agreed Sunday to join bilateral talks with Venezuela over an escalating territorial dispute.

The century-old dispute between the two South American nations recently reignited with the discovery of masses of oil in Guyana. The government of Nicolas Maduro, through a referendum last week, has claimed sovereignty over the Essequibo territory, which accounts for two-thirds of Guyana and lies near big offshore oil deposits.

Even as troops mass on both sides of the shared Venezuela-Guyana border, Guyana President Irfaan Ali said Sunday that his country will meet on the Eastern Caribbean island nation of St. Vincent on Thursday to discuss where border lines between the two nations are drawn.

But any agreement is likely to be hard won with flaring tensions on both sides.

□ □ □

Drug lords target corrupt officers in Mexico: A recent killing spree in the Mexican border city of Tijuana could have been lifted from a TV script: enraged drug lords hunting down corrupt police officers who stole a drug shipment.

Two of the officers suspected of the theft have been killed, prosecutors say. But so have at least three other officers, according to the city’s former police chief, suggesting the cartel believed to have owned the drugs may have launched a generalized retribution.

It is the latest blow for Tijuana which has the most homicides of any city in Mexico, with about double the number of the place that comes second - the border city of Ciudad Juarez. Tijuana, situated in the border state of Baja California and with a population of over 2.1 million, has for several years seen around 2,000 murders annually. By comparison, Houston, Texas, which has about the same population, saw 435 killings in 2022.

According to prosecutors, in mid-November, a half-dozen local and state police officers in Tijuana allegedly hatched a plot to steal a large shipment of drugs from a warehouse where traffickers were storing it.

Video emerged last week of the officers’ pickup truck pulling out of the building with big, plastic-wrapped bales of cocaine filling the truck bed.



A video presentation shows a Philippine coast guard personnel assisting a Philippine supply ship after it was damaged by water cannons from a Chinese coast guard vessel during a press conference on Dec. 11, 2023 in Manila, Philippines. The Philippine military chief said Monday he was with Filipino forces aboard a supply boat when it was blasted with a water cannon and surrounded and bumped by Chinese coast guard ships over the weekend in the disputed South China Sea. (AP)

Philippine military chief’s ship harassed by China, Beijing blames US for stirring trouble

The head of the Philippine military said Monday he was with his forces aboard a supply boat when it was blasted with a water cannon, surrounded and shoved by Chinese coast guard ships over the weekend in the disputed South China Sea.

China, meanwhile, accused archival the United States of encouraging the Philippines, its treaty ally, to provoke China for its own purposes, though it provided no direct evidence.

The successive days of heated confrontations un-

derscore China’s determination to assert its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, despite the possibility of fomenting a larger conflict affecting shipping and other maritime activities in the crucial waterway.

Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that China was escalating its aggression in the contested waters but said it would not deter Filipino forces from defending their territorial interests.

More than 100 official Chinese and other government-linked ships have swarmed the high seas around the contested Second Thomas Shoal, where a marooned Philippine navy ship that Brawner visited has stood for decades. He said their presence was much bigger than in previous months.

“It’s pure aggression,” Brawner said. “I witnessed how many times the big Chinese coast guard and militia ships cut our path. They water-cannoned us, then bumped us. It’s angering.” (AP)

Asia

Cabinet reshuffle looms

Japan’s PM takes stand on party’s scandal

TOKYO, Japan, Dec 11, (AP): Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Monday he planned to take “appropriate steps” over his governing party’s widening slush funds scandal as speculation is rife that he may purge implicated Cabinet members in a major shuffle this week.

The scandal mostly involves the Liberal Democratic Party’s largest and most powerful faction formerly led by assassinated ex-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Its key members, including those in top Cabinet and party posts, were suspected of systematically failing to report several hundred million yen (several million dollars) in funds in a possible violation of campaign and election laws, according to media reports. The money is alleged to have gone into unmonitored slush funds.

Kishida told reporters Monday that he is aware of the growing public distrust over the fundraising scandal and takes it seriously. He has acknowledged that authorities are investigating the scandal following a criminal complaint.

“I’ll take appropriate action at the appropriate time to restore public trust and to avoid delays in national politics,” Kishida said, without giving further details. Media reports say he may shuffle Cabinet and top party posts as early as Thursday.

The scandal and a major purge of Abe’s faction, which was key to Kishida’s own future, could stir a power struggle within the party and influence the upcoming party leadership vote in September. But the grip on power of the LDP, which has almost continually ruled postwar Japan, is seen unchanged as long as the opposition remains fractured, analysts say.

Kishida reportedly plans to replace four ministers - Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno,

Economy and Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, Agriculture Minister Ichiro Miyashita and Internal Affairs Minister Junji Suzuki - and 11 other ministerial positions in his Cabinet as well as those serving key party posts.

Approval ratings for his Cabinet have dipped below 30%.

Matsuno allegedly diverted more than 10 million yen (\$68,700) over the past five years from money he raised from faction fundraising events to a slush fund, while Nishimura allegedly kept 1 million yen (\$6,870), according to media reports.

Collecting proceeds from party events and paying kickbacks to law-makers are not illegal if recorded appropriately under the political funds law. Violations could result in penalty of up to five years in prison, but prosecution is difficult as it requires proof of a specific instruction to an accountant to not report the money transfer.

Matsuno has been criticized the repeatedly brushing off questions about his alleged involvement. “I plan to fulfil the duties given to me,” he said Monday when asked if he would step down.

The main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan was planning to submit a no-confidence motion against Matsuno later Monday, though it is expected to be voted down.

Also:

TOKYO: Divers on Sunday recovered the remains of the seventh of the eight crew members from a U.S. military Osprey aircraft that crashed off southern Japan during a training mission.

The Air Force CV-22 Osprey went down Nov. 29 just off Yakushima Island in southwestern Japan while

on its way to Okinawa. The bodies of six of the crew had since been recovered, including five from the sunken wreckage of the aircraft.

The U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command said in a statement that the body found by Air Force divers was one of the two crew members still missing. The identity of the airman had been determined but the information was being withheld until next of kin could be notified, the command said.

“Currently there is a combined effort in locating and recovering the remains of our eighth airman,” it said.

A week after the crash and repeated reminders from the Japanese government about safety concerns, the U.S. military grounded all its Osprey V-22 aircraft after a preliminary investigation indicated something went wrong with the craft that was not a human error.

The U.S.-made Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter but can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster, like an airplane, during flight.

The crash raised new questions about the safety of the Osprey, which has been involved in multiple fatal accidents over its relatively short time in service. Japan grounded its fleet of 14 Ospreys after the crash.

Japanese defense officials say Ospreys are key to the country’s military buildup especially in southwestern Japan, in the face of a growing threat from China. But the crash has rekindled worries and public protests in areas where additional Osprey deployment is planned.

Japanese residents and media have criticized Japan’s government for not pushing hard enough to get Ospreys grounded sooner or gain access to information about the crash.

Rescuers also retrieved the first two bodies last week. Nine more were recovered this weekend, the disaster management unit said.

Government officials say as many as 38 miners might have been buried under the landslides at the mine near the city of Chingola, on Zambia’s copper belt, although they aren’t certain of the exact number. They have been relying on families to

report missing relatives and fears were growing that the death toll could rise to more than 30.

“Efforts to recover the remaining accident victims are ongoing,” the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit said in a statement. (AP)

□ □ □

Kenya falls into darkness: A power



Zambian Army special forces officers follow the rescue operation of miners. (AP)

blackout hit Kenya on Sunday evening, paralyzing large parts of the country, and the transport minister called for an investigation into “possible acts of sabotage and coverup” over the third nationwide outage in three months.

The electricity failure began around 8 p.m., affecting many vital facilities, including the main airport in the capital, Nairobi, which is a major transport hub connecting East Africa to Asia, Europe and other parts of the world.

Noting the recent big outages, Transport Minister Kipchumba Murkomen said soon after visiting the airport late Sunday that “we are making a formal request to the National Police Service to investigate possible acts of sabotage and coverup.”

The state-run utility, Kenya Power, blamed the blackout on a “system disturbance” and said the problem was being addressed by technicians.

“We have lost electricity supply to various parts of the country due to a suspected fault affecting the power system,” a statement said.

Later Sunday, Kenya Power issued an update saying it had restored electricity service to parts of the country, including some residential districts in the capital, but many areas in Kenya remained without power Monday morning. (AP)

GIG, Aqua Gulf and Mabanee triumph at 2023-2024 World Branding Awards

The 17th edition of the World Branding Awards honoured the success and achievements of some of the World's Best Brands as National, Regional, and Global Winners. The 2023 - 2024 World Branding Awards saw over 1,500 brands from more than 40 countries nominated as "Brand of the Year". Of these, less than 200 were declared Winners.

The prestigious Award Ceremony was held at the home of the awards, Kensington Palace, United Kingdom. It welcomed over 100 guests worldwide and was hosted by acclaimed television presenter, David Croft.

Global winners who proved excellence and impeccable branding in their industry include Yakult (Japan), CoCo (Taiwan), LURPAK (Denmark), Marriott International (USA), and

The Body Shop (United Kingdom).

Winners from Kuwait include Aqua Gulf, GIG, Mabanee, and RIVA. Other National tier winners include Munchy's (Malaysia), Pertamina (Indonesia), Macao Imperial Tea (The Philippines), M-150 (Thailand), Airland (Hong Kong), Safaricom (Kenya), Nando's (South Africa), DamasJewellery (UAE), Boots (United Kingdom), and VISTRA (Thailand), to name a few.

Only 14 brands were selected to receive the Regional Tier award this year, including Nippon Rent-A-Car (Japan), GIG (Kuwait), MR.DIY (Malaysia), M-150 (Thailand), HECOM (Hong Kong), and VITADAY (Thailand). These brands were voted as consumers' favourites in 4 or more countries across

3 or more areas in a specific geographic region.

"This is a celebration of the continuous efforts that is vital to building outstanding brands. To stay relevant as a brand, brands must build an image that resonates and lasts. This means not only building up a culture and community around the brand through marketing, but also ensuring that all generations continue to find the brand interesting," said Mr. Richard Rowles, Chairman of the World Branding Forum.

More than 150,000 consumers participated in the nomination process globally this year. On average, there are only 5 winning brands in each country, proving that winning a World Branding Award is a remarkable accomplishment. (Business Wire)

CBK bonds

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has revealed two recent issuances of CBK Bonds and associated Tawarruq. The first, valued at KWD 240 million, spans a three-month period with a Rate of Return at 4.375%. Simultaneously, the second issuance, totaling KWD 230 million, extends over six months with a Rate of Return set at 4.500%.

Market Movements 11-12-2023

		Change	Closing pts			Change	Closing pts
SAUDI	- Tadawul	+84.23	11,380.95	UAE	- DFM	-17.00	3,934.52
JAPAN	- Nikkei	+483.94	32,791.80	EGYPT	- EGX 30	-7.77	24,182.06
				PHILLIPINES	- PSEi	-6.48	6,228.29
				PAKISTAN	- KSE 100	-250.07	65,988.00

Business

Kuwaiti equity funds show strong growth in November

Stock market grows 1.9%, hits 39.39 bln dinars

By Ahmad Fathi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Equity funds managed by Kuwaiti firms demonstrated notable growth in their performance in November, with the average performance of 33 funds operating in local, Gulf, and Arab markets rising by 2.9 percent. Concurrently, the stock market saw a 1.9 percent increase in November, elevating the market value of companies from 38.659 billion dinars at the end of October to 39.39 billion dinars by the end of November, listed at a value of 735 million dinars.

According to Al-Seyassah statistics, based on KAMCO's report, all 33 funds achieved gains in November. Traditional Kuwaiti funds showed an average performance increase of 2.3 percent, Kuwaiti Islamic funds rose by 2 percent, traditional Gulf funds increased by 5 percent, and Islamic Gulf funds rose by 2.8 percent. Traditional Arab funds increased by 3.4 percent, while Arab Islamic funds increased by 2.2 percent. The Banks Investment Fund managed by Wafra Investment Company led in performance during November with gains of 5.83 percent, followed by the Tharwa Investment Fund managed by Tharwa Investment Company with gains of 5.27 percent.

Despite this positive performance, most funds experienced a decline in the first 11 months of 2023 due to global financial market downturns and geopolitical tensions. The average performance dropped by about 14.1 percent, paralleling the stock market's 15.6 percent decline. This led to a decrease in the market value of listed companies from 46.72 billion dinars at the end of December to 39.39 billion dinars at the end of November.

Policy statistics reveal that, from the start of 2023, returns decreased for 19 out of 33 funds. Traditional Kuwaiti funds declined by 7 percent, Kuwaiti Islamic funds by 8.6 percent, and traditional Gulf funds by 8.7 percent. Conversely, Gulf Islamic funds increased by 1.55 percent,



Anwar Al-Sabah building (file photo)

Al-Salhiya to sell commercial plots

Salhiya Real Estate 'secures' Anwar Al-Sabah building for 70 mln dinars

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Salhiya Real Estate Company (SREC) has completed the deal towards the purchase of "Anwar Al-Sabah" building, one of the largest and oldest properties on Fahd Al-Salem Street in the Salhiya area, for 70 million dinars, with an area of about 9,226 square meters, reports Al-Rai daily.

The sources told Al-Rai daily that there is a plan to develop and build a new commercial complex in the place the current Anwar Al-Sabah building stands and the work is expected to be completed in three years.

The sources stated that after carrying out the necessary arrangement the SREC intends to annex part of its area to the Al-Salhiya complex, which the company owns for expansion, noting that the investment cost for that has not yet been determined.

The sources explained that another part of the acquired property will be sold by Al-Salhiya as commercial 'plots' to parties with whom there is agreement in this regard.

traditional Arab funds decreased by 0.05 percent, and Arab Islamic funds increased by 0.4 percent.

Examining local funds, the AlAhli Gulf Fund managed by Ahli Capital outperformed during the first 11 months, with gains of 8.36 percent. Following closely was the Boubyan Fund for Local and Gulf Equities, managed by Boubyan Capital Investment Company, with gains of 7.65 percent. Overall, in-

On March 24, 1975, the Municipal Council had approved the request of the heirs of the late Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to demolish and rebuild the 'Anwar Al-Sabah' buildings on 5,234 square meters area, in addition to plots 25 and 26, with a total area of 4,050 square meters, which were owned by them.

On June 25, 1975, the Municipal Council issued a decision to finally approve the project to renovate Anwar Al-Sabah buildings and then the cadastral plan for the new site was prepared, instead of the existing project plots, in order to determine its boundaries and area, which amounted to 9,226 square meters.

The first phase of the project was implemented, with an area of 3,102.58 square meters, while the second part of the property development plan was not completed due to the difficulty of the process of evacuating and demolishing old buildings, and therefore the project remained incomplete.

vestment funds saw a decline of 10.9 percent in the first 11 months, in stark contrast to the 10.8 percent increase observed in 2022. This decline can be attributed to various factors, including geopolitical events, such as the Russian-Ukrainian war and the conflict in Gaza, as well as the surge in global inflation rates and multiple interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve over the past two years.

Union of Investment Companies hosts workshop on CSR in investment sector

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Through its training arm the Investment Studies Center (ISC), Union of Investment Companies (UIC) recently hosted a thought-provoking workshop centered on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the investment sector, which was held on 07th December 2023 at UIC premises, featured a keynote address by renowned CSR expert Saud Al Rukhayes, who shared insights on the fundamentals of CSR, key aspects of successful initiatives, evaluation strategies, and the impact of such initiatives on consumer behavior. engaged the audience with a comprehensive discussion on the importance of CSR in the investment sector. Topics covered during his address included:

- An exploration of what CSR entails and its significance in today's business landscape.
 - Insights into the elements that contribute to the success of CSR programs within the investment sector.
 - Practical methods for assessing the effectiveness and impact of CSR initiatives.
 - Strategies for leveraging CSR to positively influence consumer attitudes and behaviors.
- The workshop also provided a platform for UIC members to share their experiences and best achievements in the realm of CSR. Attend-



Union of Investment Companies hosts a thought-provoking workshop centered on Corporate Social Responsibility in the investment sector, which was held on 7th December 2023 at UIC premises.

ees gained valuable insights from real-world examples, discovering how investment companies have successfully implemented CSR initiatives and made a positive impact on both the community and their business.

"We are delighted to have had Saud Al Rukhayes as our keynote speaker and to facilitate an enriching dialogue among our members on the crucial role of CSR in the investment sector," said Fadwa Darwesh, Secretary general at UIC. "This workshop not only provided valuable knowledge but also allowed our members to showcase their accomplishments in fostering socially responsible in-

vestment practices."

The event was attended by professionals, and representatives from the investment community, fostering networking opportunities and discussions on collaborative efforts to advance CSR initiatives within the sector.

Additionally, as part of a CSR initiative, Hamad Burahamah, the PR and Marketing person in the Union of Investment Companies, distributed seeds in a jar during the event. The seeds were intended to be planted on the attendees' next trip to the desert, encouraging them to always leave the environment better than they found it.

Compound climate hazards threaten productivity

GCC Sovereigns face rising climate risks: Report

By S&P Global Ratings

Physical risks from climate change are rising globally, and GCC countries could become more vulnerable to their economic and financial impacts over the next few decades if investments in adaptation and resilience stagnate.

Why it matters: On average, absent adaptation, in a slow transition scenario, about 8% of the GCC region's GDP could be at risk per year by 2050--slightly greater than the amount of GDP at risk in 2020--mainly to extreme heat and water stress. This is according to our "Sustainability Insights Research: Lost GDP: Potential Impacts Of Physical Climate Risks," published Nov. 27, New York 2023, on RatingsDirect (hereafter, the Lost GDP report; see the appendix for models used).

What we think and why: The GCC's economic geography is relatively concentrated, which makes it highly exposed to water stress, extreme heat, and occasional flooding after extreme rainfall. This is because most GDP is created in cities, hydrocarbon-producing facilities, or import/export free zones. Adaptation and resilience measures can help soften or avoid impacts in some cases. S&P Global Ratings believes most GCC sovereigns have significant resources to continue their efforts in this area

Water Stress And Extreme Heat Are The GCC's Main Climate Hazards

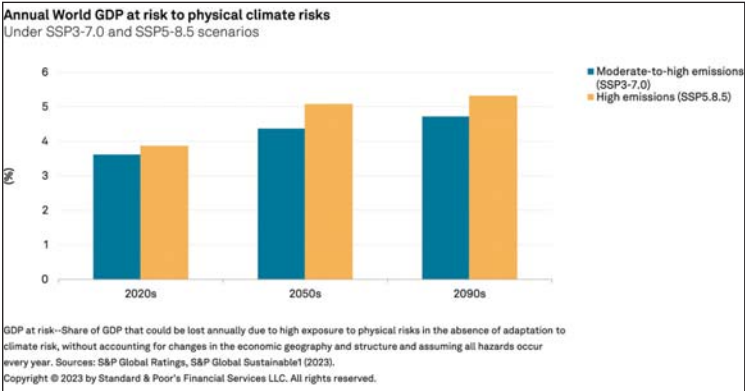
Water stress and extreme heat events are not uncommon in the GCC, which consists of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. Generally, higher temperatures raise energy requirements for cooling, while compounding water stress. There's also a risk of potential damage from pluvial flooding, which occurs during heavy rainfall.

The region is slowly heating up. As a proxy for changing exposure to extreme heat, S&P Global Sustainable's Physical Risk dataset uses the frequency that the 95th percentile of the baseline daily maximum temperature is exceeded annually. The average annual 95th percentile temperature in the GCC is 42 degrees Celsius (42 C), ranging from 38 degrees in Oman to 45 degrees in Kuwait. This was exceeded on average for the equivalent of two months in 2020. In 2050, the temperature is projected to exceed this threshold for three and a half months per year under a slow transition scenario (SSP3-7.0), absent adaptation. Alongside generally higher temperatures, additional extreme heat events will likely accelerate physical asset degradation and even capital losses rates.

Economies may find it challenging to keep up with increasing demand for water. Water stress occurs when total water withdrawals within an area exceed the available surface and ground water resources. As the region's populations expand, the climate warms, and economies develop, water demand will increase. The region's water stress ratios (projected water withdrawals to total renewable water supply in a given area) are among the highest globally. They are already more than double the 0.4 threshold for high water stress set by the World Resources Institute, according to the Lost GDP report. At the same time, greenhouse gas emissions related to energy-intensive water production could build, without substantial development of power generation from renewable sources.

High surface-water runoff in arid and urban areas can lead to flooding, even during moderate rainfall. Most of the GCC's climate is hot desert or dry land, based on the Köppen-Geiger classification, with limited vegetation to absorb rainfall and moisture. These factors expose the region's main economic centers to pluvial flood risk. A higher incidence of extreme heat could compound pluvial flood risk, increasing the amount of surface-water runoff and precipitation volumes by 2050--absent adaptation--according to our analysis.

Climate hazards add to global eco-



nomics risks. The Lost GDP report found that, by 2050, if global warming does not stay well below 2 C, up to 4.4% of the world's GDP could be lost annually, absent adaptation. This is at least one-third greater than in the Paris Agreement's scenario--consistent with Shared Socioeconomic Pathway 1-2.6 (SSP1-2.6)--in which 3.2% of global GDP may be at risk annually, according to the report. GDP at risk rises to 5.1% under a limited mitigation scenario, where emissions are high (SSP5-8.5; see chart 1).

Economic Concentrations In The GCC Imply High Exposure To Physical Climate Risks

Variations in climatic conditions are evident across the region. However, according to most classifications, GCC countries display a high degree of climatic homogeneity around their main centers of economic activity. With relatively limited agricultural capacity, and rural populations, the main centers of economic activity are in cities or in hydrocarbon production and processing zones.

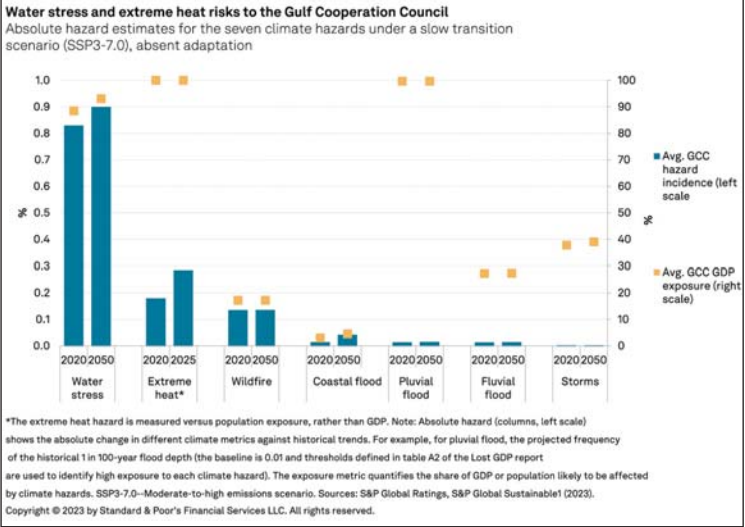
This concentration of economic output exposes almost all of the region's GDP to water stress and extreme heat, alongside occasional pluvial flooding (see chart 2). For example, for water stress, we display the projected ratio of water withdrawals to total renewable water supply in a given area; for extreme heat, the chart shows the projected annual fraction of days with maximum temperature warmer than the 95th percentile local baseline daily maximum temperature.

The region's high exposure to these climate hazards does not mean a corresponding amount of economic output will be lost as a result of a hazard occurring. By exposure, we mean the share of GDP or population likely to be affected by climate hazards. The Lost GDP report estimates the potential economic impact of these hazards, under SSP3-7.0 and excluding adaptation measures. Compared with other regions, the GCC shows the third largest GDP at risk (almost 8%) annually by 2050 without adaptation (see chart 3; the GCC forms part of the Middle East and North Africa region but is separated for comparison). That said, this was also largely the case in 2020. GDP at risk is the share of GDP that could be lost annually due to exposure to physical climate risks. This metric is based on a static view of the economy, so it doesn't account for adaptation to climate risk, changes in the economy's geography and structure, or any other growth dynamics. It also assumes all hazards occur every year.

Some Adaptation And Resilience Measures Are Already In Place

With limited groundwater resources and some of the highest average (and absolute) daily temperatures globally, extreme heat and water stress are already commonplace in the GCC. As a result, decision-makers throughout the region have--to differing extents--embedded adaptation and resilience measures into their countries' infrastructure. These measures may help reduce the potential impacts of physical climate risks. Yet they may also contribute to increased greenhouse gas emissions, particularly where additional energy is required, such as for desalination and cooling.

The use of air conditioning and desalination technologies is widespread. The GCC is estimated to hold 44% of the world's total desalinated water



Japan’s Q3 GDP revised

Japan’s economy in the July-September period shrank sharper than initially estimated, chiefly due to weaker-than-expected private consumption, the government said Friday.

The world’s No. 3 economy’s gross domestic product (GDP) weakened at an annual 2.9 percent pace in the third quarter, a downgrade from the preliminary figure of 2.1 percent decline released last month and marked the first contraction in four quarters, according to the Cabinet Office.

On a quarterly basis, GDP fell 0.7 percent in the three months ended September 30 from the previous quarter, instead of a preliminary figure of 0.5 percent slump.

Personal consumption, which makes up more than half of Japan’s GDP, declined 0.2 percent, worse than a 0.04 contraction in the preliminary data.

GDP is the total value of goods and services produced domestically. (KUNA)

Honeywell to buy Carrier’s division

Honeywell is buying Carrier Global Corp.’s security division for \$4.95 billion as it looks to strengthen its building automation capabilities.

Carrier Global’s Global Access Solutions business provides advanced access and security solutions, electronic locking systems, and contactless mobile key solutions. It has about 1,200 employees in 33 countries.

The all-cash deal includes hardware and software capabilities and the LenelS2, Onity and Supra brands.

Carrier Global said that it anticipates net proceeds of approximately \$4 billion from the sale and plans to use the funds to pay down debt.

The transaction is expected to close by the end of 2024’s third quarter.

Shares of Carrier Global rose nearly 6% before the market open on Friday, while Honeywell’s shares declined more than 2%. (AP)



A file photo of Honeywell headquarters.

55 mln more people undernourished in 2022

Asia lags behind pre-pandemic levels of food security

ROME, Dec 11, (AP): Hunger remains a chronic problem in Asia, with 55 million more people undernourished in 2022 than before the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization says in its latest assessment of food security in the region.

Most of those living without enough to eat are in South Asia, and women tend to be less food secure than men, the report says.

The FAO’s study focuses on food supply, consumption and dietary energy needs and is designed to capture a state of chronic energy deprivation that stunts growth and saps productivity and quality of life.

The share of people in the region suffering from such undernourishment fell to 8.4% in 2022 from 8.8% the year before. But that’s higher than the 7.3% of people who were undernourished before the pandemic began, sending some economies into a tailspin and depriving millions of people of their livelihoods.

Natural disasters and disruptions to food supplies, often linked to climate

change, have added to those pressures.

The FAO data show the share of people in the region facing moderate food insecurity, uncertain of their ability to obtain food and having to sometimes eat less or poorer food due to a lack of money, or those experiencing hunger that puts their well-being at serious risk, still hovers near 30% for the world and above 25% for Asia and the Pacific.

The problem is worst for women: more than one in five women in Asia, excluding East Asia, face moderate or severe food insecurity. The rates are slightly lower for men in most regions, but in Southern Asia the gap grows to more than 42% for women and more than 37% for men.

Higher food, fuel, fertilizer and livestock feed prices mean that progress has stagnated after the pandemic reversed a longstanding trend beginning in the early 2000s toward alleviation of hunger.

It’s a global problem, made worse by disruptions to supplies of grain, edible

oil and fertilizer partly due to the war in Ukraine.

Worldwide, the number of people having precarious access to food rose to nearly 2.4 billion in 2022 from just over 1.6 billion in 2015, the report said.

In Africa, the United Nations says at least three of every four Africans can’t afford a healthy diet because of an “unprecedented food crisis.”

More than half of the 735 million people who are nourished worldwide live in the Asia-Pacific, most of them in South Asia. But North Korea has the largest regional share of people who are undernourished, the report says, at about 45%, followed by Afghanistan at 30%.

The world average for undernourishment is 9.2%, while in the Pacific islands of Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand, it was nearly 21%, or more than one in five people. In Southern Asia, about 16% of people are undernourished, the report says.

Donations in ’23 focused on housing

Philanthropist reveals the groups that got some of her \$2.1b in gifts

Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott donated \$2.1 billion in the past year, she said in an online post, bringing her total reported giving to more than \$16 billion since 2019.

While previous announcements have included detailed essays about the reasons for her donations, Scott offered only a three-sentence post titled “(Giving Update)” this year, writing, “Excited to call attention to these 360 outstanding organizations, every one of whom could use more allies.” She added, “Inspired by all the ways people work together to offer each other goodwill and support.”

The gifts include three donations of \$25 million to affordable housing nonprofit Mercy Housing, reproductive care organization Upstream USA and youth training group Year Up, according to her Yield Giving website.

It’s not known if those are the largest gifts made in the past year as the database of gifts on the website withheld the amount donated to more than 100 of the recipients in 2023, with the explanation, “Disclosure delayed for benefit of recipient.”

The brevity of the announcement stood out compared to how other philanthropists publicize their work, said Gabrielle Fitzgerald, founder and CEO of The Panorama Group, which has researched the impact of Scott’s gifts on nonprofits.

“My word count had that it was 54 words,” she said. “It’s almost like a haiku.”

The gifts were consistent with Scott’s focus on economic security, education, equity and health, Fitzgerald said, though there were many this round that went to organizations that describe themselves as working on health. Scott also supported several organizations that work on caste equity.

tion and other West Coast community land trusts, which seek to keep housing affordable by removing land from the commercial real estate market permanently.

The Hawai’i Community Foundation was in the rare situation of receiving a second donation from Scott, this time of \$5 million to support its Maui Strong Fund, which it started to benefit the survivors of the wildfire that wreaked havoc on the island in August.

The foundation said the donation was supporting evolving needs like child care, connecting people to jobs and finding short- and long-term housing. Part of the donation also went to the foundation itself, in order to cover its internal operations. It’s promised that all donations to its Maui Funds will go directly to supporting recovery efforts.

“We really respect the way she approaches philanthropy, in that she trusts those of us who are on the ground and most importantly, in the community, with where to put the dollars so that they can have the most impact,” said Micah Kane, CEO and president of Hawai’i Community Foundation, of Scott. “We are trying to do the same.”

Declines

Scott declines to comment about her donations, which often are the largest a nonprofit has ever received, beyond blog posts, now published on her website, which she launched in December 2022. For the first time in March, she opened an application process to receive funding, promising to grant \$1 million to 250 organizations. Some 6,300 nonprofits applied, according to Lever for Change, the organization overseeing the application process, which has said it will announce the winners in early 2024.

Scott has promised to give away more than half of her wealth, which largely comes from her divorce from Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

According to a Center for Effective Philanthropy report released in November, Scott’s giving is “unprecedented” because she provides “meaningfully sized” donations to groups without any restrictions.

The report also addressed concerns that Scott’s substantial donations could inadvertently hurt smaller nonprofits because they would reach a “financial cliff,” where donors stop giving because they think the group no longer need money. However, the report found that 90% of groups receiving donations from Scott were able to change their fundraising strategies, adding that Scott’s donation gave them credibility and made fundraising easier.

Three years into Scott’s multi-billion dollar annual donations, Panorama’s Fitzgerald said it’s become clear that other donors are not following in her footsteps, in making large, unrestricted grants to organizations.

“It’s a one time thing,” she said. “And so how you think about spending the money should be really with the idea that this is a very amazing and wonderful opportunity that’s not the beginning of a new trajectory for most people.”

WASHINGTON, Dec 11, (AP): Attorneys for Amazon on Friday asked a federal judge to dismiss the Federal Trade Commission’s antitrust lawsuit against the e-commerce giant, arguing the agency is attacking policies that benefit consumers and competition.

Amazon’s response came more than two months after the FTC - joined by 17 states - filed the historic complaint against the Seattle-based company, alleging it inflates prices and stifles competition in what the agency calls the “online superstore market” and in the field of “online marketplace services.”

In its 31-page filing made in a federal court in Washington state, Amazon pushed back, arguing the conduct that the FTC has labeled anti-competitive consists of common retail practices that benefit consumers.

The FTC’s complaint, filed in September, accused the company of engaging in anti-competitive practices through measures that deter third-party sellers from offering lower prices for products on non-Amazon sites.

The agency said Amazon buried listings offered at lower prices on other sites. Simultaneously, it noted Amazon was charging merchants increasingly higher fees and driving up prices for products on its own site. It also alleged Amazon kept sellers dependent on services, such as its logistics and delivery service, which have allowed it to collect billions in revenue every year.

In its request for a dismissal, Amazon said the lawsuit faults Amazon for featuring competitive prices and declining to feature uncompetitive ones.

“Amazon promptly matches rivals’ discounts, features competitively priced deals rather than over-priced ones, and ensures best-in-class delivery for its Prime subscribers,” the company wrote in the filing. “Those practices - the targets of this antitrust Complaint- benefit consumers and are the essence of competition.”

Amazon also pushed back against allegations it conditions Prime eligibility on products - which denotes fast shipping - on whether sellers use its fulfillment service, Fulfillment by Amazon.

An unredacted version of the FTC’s lawsuit unveiled in November alleged Amazon used a tool - code-named “Project Nessie” - to predict where it can raise prices and have other shopping sites follow suit. The agency said Amazon used the algorithm to raise prices on some products and kept the new elevated prices



The Amazon logo is seen, Sept. 6, 2012, in Santa Monica, Calif. Attorneys for Amazon on Friday, Dec. 8, 2023 asked a federal judge to dismiss the Federal Trade Commission’s antitrust lawsuit against the retailer, arguing the agency is attacking policies that benefit consumers and competition. (AP)

Google trial ‘focused’ on Android app store payments to be handed off to jury to decide

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec 11, (AP): A federal court jury is poised begin its deliberations in an antitrust trial focused on whether Google’s efforts to profit from its app store for Android smartphones have been illegally gouging consumers and stifling innovation.

Before the nine-person jury in San Francisco starts weighing the evidence Monday, the lawyers on the opposing sides of the trial will present their closing arguments in a three-year-old case filed by Epic Games, the maker of the popular Fortnite video game.

The four-week trial included testimony from both Google CEO Sundar Pichai, who sometimes seemed like a professor explaining complex topics while standing behind a lectern because of a health issue, and Epic CEO Tim Sweeney, who painted himself as a video game lover on a mission to take down a greedy tech titan.

Epic alleged that Google has been exploiting its wealth and control of the Android software that powers most of the world’s smartphones to protect a lucrative payment system within its Play Store for distributing Android apps. Just as Apple does for its iPhone app store, Google collects a 15-30% commission from digital transactions completed within apps - a setup that generates billions of dollars annually in profit.

Google has staunchly defended the commissions as a way to help recoup the huge investments it has poured into building into the Android software that it has been giving away since 2007 to manufacturers to compete against the iPhone and pointed to rival Android app stores such as the one that Samsung installs on its popular smartphones as evidence of a free market.

Notion

Epic, though, presented evidence asserting the notion that Google welcomes competition as a pretense, citing the hundreds of billions of dollars it has doled out to companies such as game maker Activision Blizzard to discourage them from opening rival app stores.

The jury’s verdict in the case will likely hinge on how the smartphone app market is defined. While Epic has been contending Google’s Play Store is a de facto monopoly that drives up prices for consumers and discourages app makers from creating new products, Google drew a picture of a broad and fiercely competitive market that includes Apple’s iPhone app store in addition to the Android alternatives to its Play Store.

Google’s insistence that it competes against Apple in the distribution of apps despite the company’s reliance on incompatible mobile operating systems cast a spotlight on the two companies’ cozy relationship in online search - the subject of another major antitrust trial in Washington that will be decided by a federal judge after hearing final arguments in May.

The Washington trial centers on U.S. Justice Department allegations that Google has been abusing its dominance of the online search market, partly by paying billions of dollars to be the automatic place to field queries placed on personal computers and mobile devices, including the iPhone.

Evidence presented in both the San Francisco and Washington revealed Google paid \$26.3 billion in 2021 for its search to be the default choice on a variety of web browsers and smartphones, with the bulk of the money going to Apple. Without providing a precise dollar amount, Pichai confirmed Google shared 36% of its revenue from searches in the Safari browser with Apple in 2021.

petitor instead of the absolute lowest” for “limited products and duration.” The company also said it stopped the experiments in 2019, and matches its prices to the lowest prices today.

Amazon also pushed back on the

Holiday crowds at airports and on highways expected to be even bigger than last year

More Americans are expected to fly or drive far from home over Christmas than did last year, putting a cap on a busy year for travel.

Auto club AAA forecast Monday that 115.2 million people will go 50 miles or more from home during the 10 days between Dec. 23 and New Year’s Day. That’s 2.2% more than AAA predicted during the comparable stretch last year.

“That desire to get away is stronger than we have seen in a very long time,” said AAA spokeswoman Aixa Diaz. “People are willing to adjust their

budgets in other areas of their life, but they want to keep traveling.”

The AAA predicts that the holiday season will still fall 3% short of record travel in 2019, the last Christmas before COVID-19 hit the United States.

Air travel in the U.S. has already rebounded, surpassing 2019 levels.

The number of travelers going through U.S. airport checkpoints is up 12.4% over last year and 1.4% higher than in 2019, according to the Transportation Security Administration. Travel around the Thanksgiving Day holiday topped

2019 numbers, peaking at 2.9 million - a single-day record for TSA - screened on Sunday, Nov. 26. Airlines are predicting a blockbuster holiday season.

Airlines for America says 39 million people - about 2.8 million a day on average - will board U.S. flights between Dec. 20 and Jan. 2. The trade group for big U.S. carriers expects about 3 million on the peak days - the Thursday and Friday before Christmas and the four days after the holiday.

The airlines count people more than once if they take connecting flights in-

stead of nonstops, so their numbers are higher than those reported by TSA.

Travel is strong even though many Americans say they are worried about the economy. In an AP-NORC poll last week, seven out of 10 people surveyed rated the economy as poor. But at least inflation has cooled off a bit.

Airline passengers are getting a slight break from last year’s high prices. Average fares in October were 13% lower than a year earlier, according to the government’s latest data.

AAA predicts that 7.5 million people

will fly in the U.S. in late December, but the club expects far more - nearly 104 million - to drive over the holidays.

Motorists will pay a bit less to fill up. The national average price for a gallon of gasoline was \$3.19 at the end of last week, compared with \$3.33 a year earlier, according to AAA. Gas is under \$3 a gallon across a swath in the middle of the country.

Travel for Christmas and New Year’s is spread out over a couple weeks, so the busiest days rarely match the Thanksgiving peaks - TSA counted

a record 2.9 million air travelers on the Sunday after the November holiday.

Transportation data provider INRIX predicted that highways will be busiest on Saturday, Dec. 23, and Thursday, Dec. 28.

AAA’s Diaz notes that many people are still working during the holidays. Vacationers heading to visit family will be mixing with commuters on the roads, “so rush hour could still be bad,” she said. “We always say leave as early as possible if you’re hitting the road or leave at night.”

Tree planting event marks second successful campaign

Korean Embassy, KOC spearhead ‘Go Green Kuwait’ for a greener future

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the State of Kuwait and Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) co-hosted the tree planting event, “Go Green Kuwait,” on December 9, 2023, at KOC’s Al-Abdaliya Natural Preserve. This significant environmental initiative was co-organized in cooperation with the Korean Community in Kuwait.

Ambassador Chung Byung-ha expressed enthusiasm about this being the second time of the campaign, emphasizing the Korean community’s deepening engagement with local Kuwaiti society and its steadfast commitment to natural environmental conservation in Kuwait. Ambassador Chung extended heartfelt appreciation to KOC and its volunteering staff for their invaluable support in preparing this event.

In a significant gesture of collaboration, KOC designated an exclusive tree planting zone for the Korean Community within its Natural Preserve, symbolizing a shared commitment to environmental conservation and cross-cultural cooperation.

The “Go Green Kuwait” campaign is more than a tree-planting event; it is aimed at restoring ecological resilience in Kuwait’s unique environment. The initiative focused on planting specific tree species - *Vachellia tortilis* and *Rhanterium epapposum* - capable of thriving in the challenging conditions of the water-scarce Kuwaiti desert. This campaign highlights the crucial role of tree planting in mitigating the effects of climate change. Trees are also key to preserving biodiversity, preventing soil erosion, and maintaining ecological balance.

Adding to the diversity of the campaign, members from Roots & Shoots, an environmental protection circle from the American School of Kuwait (ASK), joined the event, further exemplifying the collaborative spirit of this initiative.



Photos during the ‘Go Green Kuwait’ tree planting event.



Organizers with notable speakers pose for a group photo.



Photos taken during the conference.

Experts tackle cerebral palsy awareness

Royal Britannia Kindergarten champions inclusivity with special needs conference

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: In commemoration of the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs, situated in Al Siddiq, recently organised a conference addressing the challenges faced by individuals with physical disabilities, with specific focus on Cerebral Palsy. The event, coordinated by Ms Maha Al Jassim, a dedicated mother and Physical Disability Instructor and sponsored by Briefu, brought together distinguished speakers and experts in the field.

The conference featured notable speakers, including Dr. Saleh Al Saifi, Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon-Consultant, Dr. Roubha Khair, Physiotherapy Specialist and Head of Rehabilitation, and Dr. Laila Qassim, Physiotherapy Specialist. The audience was comprised of various esteemed guests who shared a common interest in promoting awareness and understanding of physical disabilities.

The discussions during the event revolved around the various levels of Cerebral Palsy and the comprehensive approaches to its treatment. The speakers emphasised that surgery should be considered as a last resort after exhausting

conservative methods, such as Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, and Botulinum Toxin (Botox) treatment. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of evaluating the child’s age before opting for surgery and stressed the significance of continuous physiotherapy support before, during, and after any intervention.

The conference shed light on the critical role of braces in the rehabilitation process and emphasised the collaborative efforts required between home and specialists. The speakers also underscored the pivotal role played by educational institutions like Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs, highlighting the understanding of developmental milestones and the importance of aligning goals.

Royal Britannia Kindergarten for Special Needs expressed gratitude to the esteemed speakers, attendees, and sponsors for their support. The institution remains committed to fostering awareness and extending support to parents of children with special needs. By organising this kind of events, Royal Britannia Kindergarten aims to contribute to building a more inclusive and understanding society.

Platform empowering young minds for brilliant future

ICSK-IIK holds 5th edition of Higher Education Fair

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Under the glistening sun and the pleasant morning breeze, the doors and gates of The Indian Community School, Senior, bedecked in its glory of elegance and grace, rolled out a carpet of welcome to the dignitaries, staff, parents and the students to the much-awaited Higher Education Fair 2023 organized by The Indian Community School, Kuwait in collaboration with Indians in Kuwait on 8th and 9th December 2023. The fifth edition of the Higher Education Fair at ICSK offered the students an unparalleled chance to delve into the realm of affordable higher education options and directly interact with the representatives of reputed universities and colleges of India and abroad. The fair broadened students’ horizons, exposing them to a plethora of academic possibilities.

The occasion was graced by the esteemed presence of the Chief Guest, H.E. Aliya Mawani, Hon. Ambassador of Canada to the State of Kuwait. Among the dignitaries were Mr. Sajith Thomas, Career Counsellor & Educational Expert, Dr.T. P. Sethumadhavan, Career Consultant Director, Mr. Shaikh Abdul Rahiman, Hon.Chairman to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Amer Mohamed, Hon. Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Vinukumar Nair, Hon. Vice Chairman to the Board of Trustees, Mr. Sunoj Nambiar, Director Operations of IIK, Mr. Wilson D’Souza, Director Marketing of IIK, Mr. George Mathew, Director Finance of IIK, Mr. Ravi Ayanoli, Principal of FAIPS DPS, Kuwait, Dr. Prashant Vasudev, Principal of Gulf Indian School, Kuwait, Mr. Anoop Kumar, Principal of New Gulf Indian School, Mr. Achuthan Madhav, Principal of Jabriya Indian School, Kuwait, Dr. V. Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK Senior, Mr. Gangadhar Shirsath, Principal of ICSK Khaitan, Mr. Rajesh Nair, Principal of ICSK Amman, Mrs. Sherly Dennis, Director and Principal of Indian School of Excellence and Mrs. Sheeja C., Principal of ICSK Junior.

The ICSK -IIK Higher Education Fair 2023 was inaugurated by the esteemed Chief Guest, H.E. Aliya Mawani by releasing the doves – a symbol commemorating global peace and cutting the ribbons. Cherishing the memories for years to come the dignitaries’ joined hands during the cake cutting ceremony. Mr. Shaik Abdul Rahiman, Honorary Chairman to the Board of Trustees presented a memento, a token of gratitude and appreciation to the honorable Chief Guest, H.E. Aliya



Photo from the event.

Mawani. The dignitaries explored the Expo – a great networking platform of the world’s best Universities & Colleges of India and abroad. The inaugural ceremony marked the commencement of the events for the day.

The Higher Education Fair was a four-dimensional programme comprising Career Mapped Aptitude Test, Personalized Career Counselling Sessions, Career Talk Sessions and University Expo. The Career Mapped Aptitude Test and Personalized Career Counselling Sessions led by Mr. Sajith Thomas, a renowned Career Counsellor & Educational Expert witnessed the participation of 260 students. The aptitude test helped in analyzing the interests, strength and skills of the students thus directing towards the best career options for them to pursue. The successful completion of the aptitude test was followed by personalized Career Counselling Sessions attended by both parents and the students. In streamline to the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of the students as reflected in the comprehensive assessment report, students were guided towards the right career.

ICSK – IIK brought under its umbrella 36 reputed Business Schools, Tourism Management, Medical and Engineering Colleges, Universities of India and Abroad to showcase the latest educational opportunities available. This Expo provided the parents and students an excellent opportunity to meet university officials and get first-hand information about various study programs, prospects, admission requirements, eligibility, fees, scholarships, student life, courses which helped young generation to steer their careers in the right direction. It also allowed the

students to explore potential academic journeys tailored to their interests.

Five Career Talk Sessions, explicitly conducted for the students of classes 9, 10, 11 and 12 witnessed the commendable participation of 3000 students and parents. Dr. T. P. Sethumadhavan, a renowned Career Consultant Director navigated the session highlighting the multitude of career options present in the modern world. The session delved into crucial topics like career planning, application strategies and emerging trends in different sectors. Student’s participation during the question – answers session was robust. It facilitated direct interaction with the expert, enabling students to gain valuable insights and dispel any uncertainties.

The audience showered their love and appreciation for the institutions in the interview conducted at the conclusion of every Career Talk Session. Students appreciated the diverse range of institutions and found the information beneficial for making informed decisions. Positive feedback highlighted the fair’s success in demystifying the higher education landscape.

ICSK -IIK Higher Education Fair 2023 was a one-stop destination that catered to the enquiries regarding career choices of the future. From identifying the true potential of the young minds and giving personalized counselling to highlighting a magnitude of career options and guiding the youths to channelize their energy in the right direction, the ICSK -IIK Higher Education Fair 2023 was a resounding success. It played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between students and higher education institutions and shaping students’ perceptions and aspirations.

Indonesian migrants shine in Kuwait’s premier futsal showcase

Ifak League 2023’s resounding return ignites sporting passion

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: The eagerly awaited return of the Ifak League is on the horizon, marking its comeback after a one-year hiatus. The event is all set to take place at the Public Authority Sport Mishrif in the State of Kuwait, bringing together the Indonesian migrant workers in Kuwait within the vibrant futsal community for this highly anticipated annual gathering.

The Ifak League 2023 is scheduled to unfold every Friday from 8 am to 11 am Kuwait time, spanning from November 10 to December 8, 2023. The league enjoys sponsorship from notable entities, including the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuwait, the Kuwait branch of Bank Rakyat Indonesia, and the Bali Gulf Company.

Kicking off with an inaugural ceremony under the auspices of the Extraordinary Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Kuwait, Mrs. Lena Maryana Mukti, the event featured remarks by Mrs. Ratna Sari Dewi, the Labor Attache of the Republic of Indonesia to Kuwait. Captain Made Bagler, Chief Executive



Photos taken during the Ifak League 2023.



of the Ifak League 2023, played a pivotal role, and the festivities included a stirring performance of the National Anthem of Greater Indonesia by Mrs. Indrit Kumalasari, concluding with a reading by Captain Rahmat.

The tournament showcased the participation of ten Indonesian futsal

teams in Kuwait, such as Batosai FC, Race FC, Garangan FC, Nusra FC, Syabab Student FC, MU FC, Vechter FC, Barbados FC, BBK FC, and KKS FC. A friendly match between Malaysia FC and Indonesia FC, along with a children’s exhibition featuring Andalous FC and Riggae FC, added an extra

layer of excitement. The event was further enriched with the introduction of Indonesian culinary delights.

Acknowledgments were extended to the dedicated organizing committee, led by 13 visionary captains: Yahya Muhidin, Mustika Yani, Sidik Setia Atmanegara, Ladi Diana, Ngurah Rai,

Ogik GR, Ryan, Indrit, Heru, Made Bagler, Khoerl, and Rahmat.

The tournament embraced a group and points system, with Syabab Student FC claiming the top spot, followed by Batosai FC in 2nd place, Nusra FC securing 3rd place, and MU FC clinching 4th place. Reza and Ropi

emerged as the top scorers.

The closing ceremony, graced by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Kuwait and Extraordinary Plenipotentiary Mrs. Lena Maryana, featured speeches and prize distributions. Mrs. Ratna Sari Dewi, the Indonesian Labor Attaché for Kuwait, honored the top scorer, while other prizes were presented by Mrs. Osrinikita Zubhana and Mrs. Sri Dewi Kuntarti, representing social and cultural information and economic functions, respectively. Award certificates were bestowed upon all participating teams and sponsors, including Mr. Trisno from BRI, Mr. Indra from Bali Gulf Company, and culinary supporters represented by Mrs. Berty Yusnita, Um Tong Tong, and Zainudin.

The Ifak League 2023 aspires to promote positivity and encourage teams to prioritize their well-being. The resounding message emphasizes that maintaining a healthy body contributes to a resilient spirit, highlighting the importance of regular exercise for overall fitness and well-being, regardless of age.

Band seeks to reunite in 2025

BTS members RM and V start compulsory military service

SEOUL, South Korea, Dec 11, (AP): Singers RM and V of the K-pop band BTS began their mandatory military duties under South Korean law, their management agency announced Monday. This came a day before two of their bandmates, Jimin and Jung Kook, were also expected to report for duty.

Three other BTS members - Jin, J-Hope and Suga - are already months into their conscription. The seven singers of the popular K-pop band plan to reunite as a group sometime in 2025 after they finish their service.

Jin and J-Hope are serving in the army while Suga is fulfilling his duty as a social service agent, an alternative form of military service.

According to HYBE, the band’s management company, RM and V arrived at an army boot camp in the central city of Nonsan to start their 18-month compulsory service.

The company said Jimin and Jung Kook would report to the army together. It didn’t immediately confirm South Korean media reports that they would be at the boot camp on Tuesday.

“I’ve been so happy to have been a part of BTS for the past 10 years ... Eighteen months can feel both long and short at the same time and I’m sure this period will be a strange and new time of inspiration and learning for all of us,” RM said in a statement posted

on his Instagram account. “See you in the future. I love you a lot.”

RM and V will receive five weeks of combat training before being assigned to specific units and duties. The Military Manpower Administration has stressed that the singers would go through the same process as other South Korean males conscripted for service.

Prestige

Under South Korean law, most able-bodied men must perform 18-21 months of military service. Special exemptions are granted for athletes and classical artists who excel in certain kinds of international competitions tied to national prestige. But such privileges haven’t been extended to K-pop singers.

Last year, a fierce public debate flared over whether BTS members should proceed with their military services, with some politicians arguing that their artistic achievements were worthy of exemption.

The discourse ended in October 2022 when their management company announced that all seven of the band’s singers plan to fully serve their military duties. In December, Jin became the first BTS member to enter the army he withdrew his request to delay conscription.

BTS launched in 2013 and has a legion of global supporters who

happen to call themselves the “Army.”

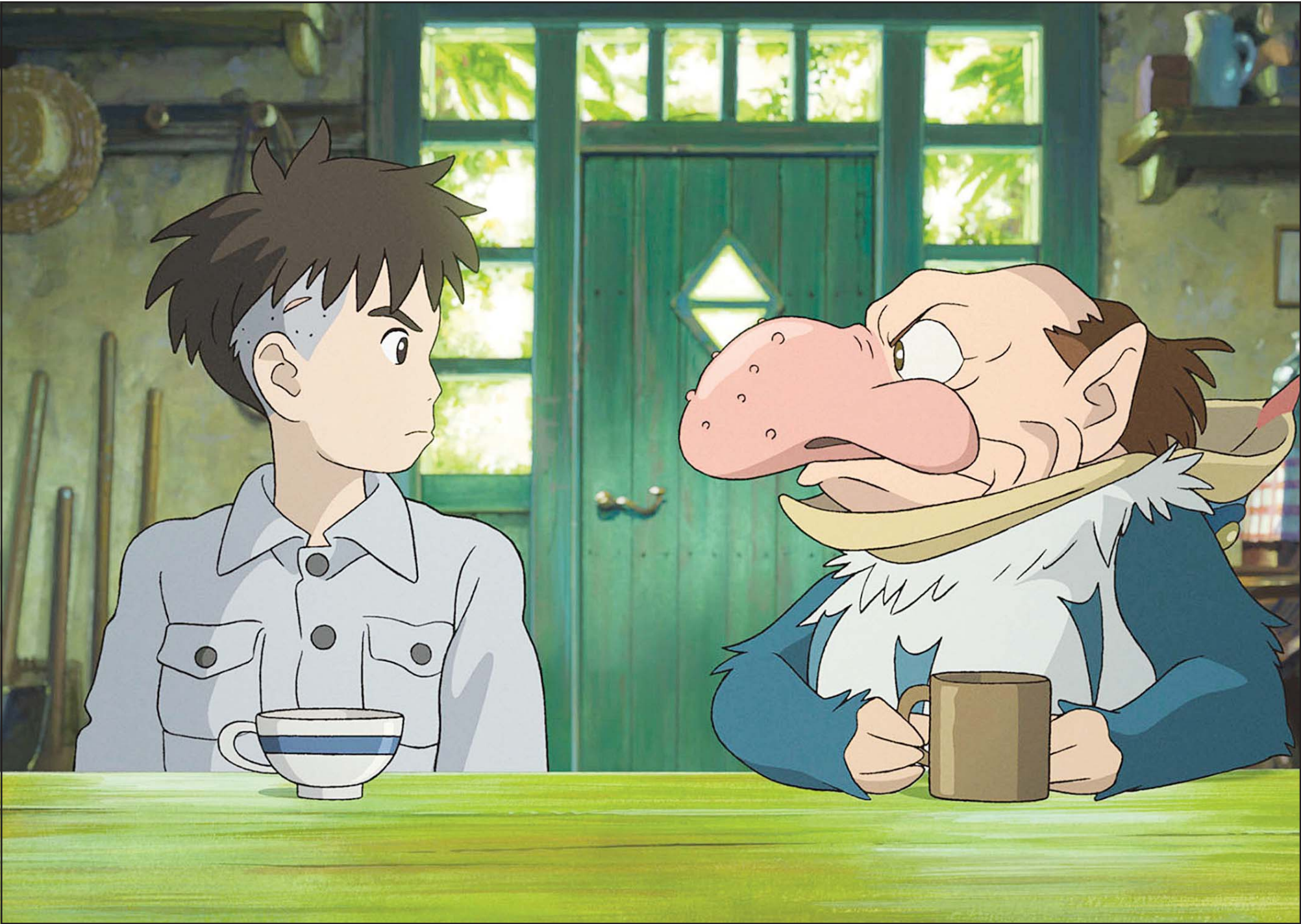
After garnering a huge following in Asia, BTS expanded its popularity in the West with its 2020 megahit “Dynamite,” the band’s first all-English song that topped Billboard’s Hot 100. The band has performed in sold-out arenas globally and was even invited to speak at United Nations meetings.

Young men who get drafted into the army are forced to suspend their studies or professional careers, making mandatory military service a highly sensitive issue in South Korea that has sparked heated debates and even gender tensions in a hyper-competitive job market.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: There’s good news if you’re burning, burning for Blue Öyster Cult: The classic rock band is celebrating its 50th anniversary with an album of three live sold-out shows, “50th Anniversary Live - First Night.” The set is built around three sold-out shows the band played in September 2022 at Sony Hall in **New York City**. Each show featured the band playing in its entirety one of their first three albums (“Blue Öyster Cult”, “Tyranny and Mutation” and “Secret Treaties”), followed by a set of deep cuts and classics from their other albums.

Variety



This image released by GKIDS shows Mahito Maki, voiced by Luca Padovan in English and Soma Santoki in Japanese, (left), and Grey Heron, voiced by Robert Pattinson in English and Masaki Suda in Japanese, in a scene from Hayao Miyazaki’s ‘The Boy And The Heron.’ (AP)

Film

Miyazaki’s imaginative odyssey

Surreal wonders in ‘Boy and the Heron’

By Jake Coyle

When Hayao Miyazaki’s “The Boy and the Heron” premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, the filmmaker Guillermo del Toro said in his introductory remarks: “We are privileged enough to be living in a time where Mozart is composing symphonies.”

You might be tempted to call that hyperbole, but - this being Miyazaki, the legendary anime filmmaker of “Spirited Away,” “My Neighbor Totoro” and “Kiki’s Delivery Service” - it’s closer to fact. The occurrence of a new film from Miyazaki deserves to be treated like the coming of a seldom-seen comet or something rarer still, like a winning New York Jets season.

Ten years ago, Miyazaki released the profoundly personal “The Wind Rises.” It was then expected to be his swan song. But the 82-year-old filmmaker - known for his propensity for retiring again and again - soon announced that he would make one more. A decade of anticipation followed. Then, just as “The Boy and the Heron” finally debuted, word came that Miyazaki is pondering yet another movie.

As long as he keeps extending, so does our chance to keep returning to some of the most magical realms of animation. Watching “The Boy and the Heron,” which opened in US recently, is like returning to a faintly familiar dreamland. Only, since the only location here is really Miyazaki’s boundless imagination, it’s less the feeling of stepping back into a recognizable place than it is revisiting a well-remembered sense of discombobulation and wonder.

“The Boy and the Heron,” loosely adapted from Genzaburo Yoshino’s 1937 novel “How Do You Live?,” first feels like a familiar setup for Miyazaki. A young protagonist is harboring an inexpressible grief while traveling to a new home. In the film’s indelible, nightmarish opening scenes, a boy’s mother dies in a Tokyo hospital fire amid bombing late in

World War II. Flames fill the frame.

A year later, the boy, Mahito (voiced by Soma Santoki in the subtitled version I saw) is sent to live in a country estate by his father, who has already found a new wife, Natsuko (Yoshino Kimura). She’s also the younger sister of Mahito’s deceased mother. The basic framework of the story has personal echoes for Miyazaki. As a three-year-old, he was evacuated with his family to the countryside during the war.

Mahito is miserable in his new home. He doesn’t like his stepmother-to-be and the kids at school are unkind. To escape going to school, he gives himself a head wound. Not unlike the 10-year-old Chihiro of “Spirited Away,” who’s transported into a fantastical world from an abandoned amusement park en route to her family’s new home, Mahito finds a portal to a surreal dimension while ambling around the estate’s grounds.

Fantasy

He’s prodded toward an old tower, built by Mahito’s great-uncle, by an ornery gray heron (Masaki Suda) who won’t leave him alone. Think of herons and you might picture elegant, long-legged creatures, but this one is more of an annoying pest. It’s also a kind of disguise, because a big-nosed man peels back the bird’s head like a child momentarily taking off a Hollywood costume. He becomes something of a mischievous guide to Mahito. In Miyazaki films, guardian angels seldom look the part. (The English dub versions includes a voice cast of Christian Bale, Gemma Chan, Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson.)

Once Mahito makes his way into the tower, he lands in a fantasy world that, for its pure vividness, rivals anything Lewis Carroll ever dreamed up. There are armies of giant parakeets who protect a Parakeet King and little balls of sprites called the Waruwaru that float serenely to the sky. Almost like a Miyazaki greatest hits, “The Boy and the Heron”

is filled with little fluffy orbs and fantastical oversized creatures, with drips of blood and drops of tears. It is, though, more avian than any previous Miyazaki movie, which tended to lead into wooded forests or watery seas. “The Boy and the Heron” will be, certainly, a hit among psychedelic-loving bird watchers.

But just as in the world above, there is violence and cruelty here, too. (Gird yourself now for the fate of the Waruwaru.) This is less a fantasy to escape to than a parallel world, populated with childlike versions of some of the people in Mahito’s life, including his mother. It’s a dizzying place that seems just as directly pulled from Miyazaki’s subconscious as any other realm he’s conjured before. You’ll leave “The Boy and the Heron” in disbelief that this, supposedly, is a filmmaker in autumn. It’s just as uncompromising a vision, and just as attuned to the experience of childhood.

“The Boy and the Heron” eventually drifts toward an aged, long-haired wizard (voiced by Shōhei Hino) who’s spent his years holding this strange world together. As it teeters on the brink of collapse, he offers to bequeath his creation and all its responsibilities to Mahito, who instead decides to return to his own world. It’s a parting sentiment from Miyazaki, a great sorcerer himself. Here, Miyazaki makes his peace with seeing his own tower crumble, while imploring his legion of followers: Go and create your own worlds, dream your own dreams.

Whether it’s a final goodbye or not, it’s among the most poignant partings of recent cinema. It’s a grand culmination of both Miyazaki’s extraordinary body of work and of a film that gathers, like a flock, or a symphony, so many of his trademark obsessions.

“The Boy and the Heron,” a Studio Ghibli release is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for some violent content/bloody images and smoking. Running time: 124 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four. (AP)

lier collected \$56 million in Japan despite zero promotion. Studio Ghibli opted to release the film without production stills, trailers, ads or billboards.

The US and Canadian release included conventional advertising but was similarly handled with the care of something truly special as a Miyazaki movie. Throughout



Miyazaki



Pattinson

this year, all 10 of Miyazaki’s films with Ghibli were rereleased in theaters by GKIDS, which was founded in 2008 as way to bring ambitious animation to wider audiences.

“Working on a Hayao Miyazaki film is a huge honor but also kind of terrifying,” Beckman said. “We’re really just trying to do

justice to the film.”

Last week’s top film, “Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé,” dropped steeply in its second weekend. The concert film, the second pop star release distributed by AMC Theatres following Taylor Swift’s “The Eras Tour,” collected \$5 million in its second weekend, a decline of 76% from

its \$21 million opening.

That allowed Lionsgate’s still-going-strong “The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes” to take second place, with an estimated \$9.4 million in its fourth weekend of release. The “Hunger Games” prequel has a domestic haul of \$135.7 million. (AP)

People & Places

Stage

Pioneering musical

‘How to Dance’ puts spotlight on autism

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP): Actor **Haven Burton** wasn’t worried about what professional critics thought of her new musical “How to Dance in Ohio.” Who she really wanted to hear from was her 11-year-old son, Hudson.

The show follows seven autistic characters as they prepare for a spring dance. After co-starring in a performance this fall, Burton asked her son what he thought. His opinion mattered not just because Mom is in it but also because he has autism.

“He said, ‘I loved it. It was amazing. I just I can’t believe that there are people who think like me,’” Burton recalled. “I thought, ‘This is why I am doing this. This is why this is so important.’”



Burton

commercial value, but at its very core, our values are to educate.”

Based on the Peabody Award-winning documentary of the same name, the musical is set at a counseling center in Columbus as a group of autistic young adults develop social skills and make connections. Seven openly autistic actors - aged between 19 and 36 - are playing the autistic characters, a first for Broadway.

“It just feels like a really special moment in time in the industry - important to bring awareness, to have this kind of representation on stage that is authentic,” says Barton, who along with her husband are co-producers.

Performances

Autism has been explored before on Broadway - “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” was a 2015 best play Tony winner with a lead character on the autism spectrum - and autism-friendly performances of many shows have been offered for over a decade, but this is the first time all the lead actors of a show are on the spectrum.

“The core seven of us are sort of the face of autism on Broadway right now, which is massive,” said Ashley Wool, making her Broadway debut playing the daughter of Burton’s character. “We represent a good amount of the experience, but it’s still only the tip of the iceberg of the stories that can be told within and by and alongside the autistic and neurodiverse community.”

Previous attempts at portraying autism, she said, have focused on the condition: “Anybody can read about autism in a textbook and understand it as kind of a diagnostic list of symptoms and traits and tendencies. But our show introduces the audience to more autistic culture.”

The musical doesn’t shy away from the challenges people with autism encounter or the worries their parents face, as illustrated in one of Burton’s songs, “Getting Ready for the Dance,” with the lines: “So many things the other kids do/Ours get nevers, nos and can’ts.”

“We’re always trying to be very cautious of that line between grief and celebration, because you can hold both as a parent,” Burton says. “I think that you grieve the moment you become a parent regardless of who your child is, because parenting is like wearing your heart outside of your body for the rest of your life.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, autism affects an estimated 1 in 36 children in the United States today. But Burton says “How to Dance in Ohio” is a musical for everyone.

“It’s not just a show about autism. It’s a show about connection. It’s a show about growth. It’s about overcoming challenges and finding things in common,” she said. “But for people that do have a touch point to autism, I think there is a real profound recognition of what’s happening on stage.”

The show has also tried to accommodate autistic theatergoers, offering cool-down spaces, fidget spinners and headphones that offer a separate, sensory-friendly mix of the show specially designed for autistic patrons.

Wool, who was diagnosed as autistic in college but hid it for a decade for fear she wouldn’t work if the news was public, has been cheered by the strides the autism community has made in the past few years.

“The conversation around autism has shifted so much even within my lifetime,” she said. “I’m an example of what an autistic person can accomplish when they are listened to and supported and accommodated and surrounded by resources and nonjudgmental people who love them for who they are.”

As for Burton, she is dedicating her performance to Hudson. In the Playbill, she says he “leads with a courageous heart in a world that was not designed for him. I hope you take our story with you and leave our theater curious, kind and willing to challenge the world around you.”

Every night, she says, she shares a message to her fellow actors before they go on: “Tell the truth. Tell the truth. Don’t forget to tell the truth.”

Also:

NEW YORK: Broadway audiences will soon be hearing the hit songs of **Alicia Keys** - not far from where the multiple-Grammy-winner grew up.

“Hell’s Kitchen,” the semi-autobiographical musical by the singer-songwriter, is making the move up-town from off-Broadway to the Shubert Theatre this spring.

“I loved going to the theater and I was inspired by it and the songwriting and the expression and the beauty and the way you could be transported,” she tells The Associated Press. “But I never really put it together that maybe one day I would be able to have a debut on Broadway.”

Performances begin March 28 with an opening set for April 20. Tickets are on sale Dec. 11. No casting news was revealed but **Maleah Joi Moon** was the lead off-Broadway.

The musical features Keys’ best-known hits: “Fallin’,” “No One,” “Girl on Fire,” “If I Ain’t Got You,” and, of course, “Empire State of Mind,” as well as four new songs.

The coming-of-age story about a gifted teenager is by playwright **Kristoffer Diaz**, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for “The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity.” It is directed by **Michael Greif**, who also helmed “Dear Evan Hansen,” and has choreography by **Camille A. Brown**.



This image released by Vivacity Media Group shows Desmond Luis Edwards, center, with the cast during a performance of ‘How to Dance in Ohio.’ (AP)



Calah Lane, (left), and Timothee Chalamet arrive at the premiere of ‘Wonka’ on Sunday, Dec. 10, at Regency Village Theatre in Westwood, Calif. (AP)



Seacrest



Glazer

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Jonathan Glazer’s chilling Auschwitz-set drama, “The Zone of Interest,” has been named best movie of the year by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association.

The critics group, which announced its picks late Sunday after a day-long meeting, also awarded prizes for Glazer’s directing and **Mica Levi**’s score. It selected **Sandra Hüller**, who stars in both “The Zone of Interest” and the French courtroom drama “Anatomy of a Fall,” for one of its two lead performance awards.

The critics, as they often do, deviated considerably from their East Coast corollary, the New York Film Critics Circle. That group earlier named **Martin Scorsese**’s “Killers of the Flower Moon” the year’s best film.

The Los Angeles Film Critics Association, which doesn’t delineate gender in its acting categories, gave all four of its acting awards to women.

In the lead acting category, the winners were Hüller and **Emma Stone**, the star of **Yorgos Lanthimos**’s Frankenstein riff “Poor Things.” The supporting performance prizes went to **Rachel McAdams** for the **Judy Blume** adaptation “Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret”; and to **Da’Vine Joy Randolph**, co-star of the boarding school comedy-drama “The Holdovers.”

Last year, “Tár” and “Everything Everywhere All at Once” tied for the group’s top prize. This year’s awards will be handed out in a ceremony on Jan. 13.

Here’s a full list of the picks by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association:

Best Film: “The Zone of Interest”
Best Director: Jonathan Glazer, “The Zone of Interest”

Best Lead Performance: Sandra Hüller, “Anatomy of a Fall” and “The Zone of Interest”; and Emma Stone, “Poor Things”

Best Supporting Performance: Rachel McAdams, “Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret”; and Da’Vine Joy Randolph, “The Holdovers”

Best Non-English Language Film: “Anatomy of a Fall”

New Generation Award: **Celine Song**, “Past Lives”

Best Screenplay: **Andrew Haigh**, “All of Us Strangers”

Best Documentary: “Menus-Plaisirs - Les Troisgros”

Best Animated Film: “The Boy and the Heron”

Best Editing: **Laurent Sénéchal**,

Nominations

‘Succession’ top-nominated TV program

‘Oppenheimer’ scores 8 Globes nods

LOS ANGELES, Dec 11, (AP): Greta Gerwig’s “Barbie” dominated the Golden Globe Awards nominations with nine nods for the blockbuster film, including best picture musical or comedy as well as acting nominations for Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling and three of its original songs.

It was closely followed by its release date and meme companion “Oppenheimer,” which scored eight nominations, including best picture drama and for actors Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt.

The revamped group, now a for-profit endeavor with a larger and more diverse voting body, announced nominations Monday for its January awards show, after scandal and several troubled years, including one without a broadcast. Cedric the Entertainer and Wilmer Valderrama presided over the announcements from the Beverly Hilton Hotel, where the show will also take place on Jan. 7.

Films nominated for best motion picture drama included “Oppenheimer,” Martin Scorsese’s “Killers of the Flower Moon,” Bradley Cooper’s “Maestro,” Celine Song’s “Past Lives,” Justine Triet’s “Anatomy of a Fall” and Jonathan Glazer’s “The Zone of Interest.”

In the best motion picture musical or comedy category, “Barbie” was joined by “Air,” “American Fiction” “The Holdovers,” “May December” and “Poor Things.”

Yorgos Lanthimos’ “Poor Things” and Scorsese’s “Killers of the Flower Moon” both received seven nominations each. “Poor Things” saw nominations for Lanthimos, its actors Emma Stone, Mark Ruffalo, Willem Dafoe, Tony McNamara for screenplay and Jerkin Fendrix for score. “Killers of the Flower Moon” got nods for Scorsese, for direction and co-writing the screenplay with Eric Roth, and stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Lily Gladstone and Robert De Niro.

“Barbie” tied for second-most nominations in Globes history with “Cabaret,” from 1972. Robert Altman’s “Nashville” remains the record-holder with 11 nominations. It went into the morning as a favorite top, and got a big boost from its three original song nominations, includ-

ing “I’m Just Ken,” and one of the year’s new categories, recognizing cinematic and box office achievement.

“Succession” was the top-nominated television program, with nine nods including for series stars Brian Cox, Jeremy Strong, Sarah Snook and Kieran Culkin.

The box office achievement category nominated eight films, including “Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour,” “The Super Mario Bros. Movie,” “Oppenheimer,” “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse,” “Mission: Impossible –Dead Reckoning,” “John Wick: Chapter 4” and “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3.” Several years ago the Oscars attempted to add a similar “popular film” category, but it proved to be an immensely unpopular decision and was scuttled amid backlash.

Surprises

As always there were some big surprises, like Jennifer Lawrence getting nominated for her bawdy R-rated comedy “No Hard Feelings” for best performance by a female actor in a musical or comedy. She was nominated alongside Robbie, Stone and Fantasia Barrino (“The Color Purple”), Natalie Portman (“May December”) and Alma Pöysti (“Fallen Leaves”).

“The Color Purple” was widely expected to do better with the Golden Globes. The adaption of the stage musical got only two nominations total for Barrino and Danielle Brooks for her supporting performance.

Here are a selection of other nominees:

■ **Animated film:** “The Boy and the Heron”; “Elemental”; “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse”; “The Super Mario Bros. Movie”; “Suzume”; “Wish.”

■ **Non-English language film:** “Anatomy of a Fall”; “Fallen Leaves”; “Io Capitano”; “Past Lives”; “Society of the Snow”; “The Zone of Interest.”

■ **Best actor in a television drama:** Brian Cox, “Succession”; Kieran Culkin, “Succession”; Gary Oldman, “Slow Horses”; Pedro Pascal, “The Last of Us”; Jeremy Strong, “Succession”; Dominic West, “The Crown.”

■ **Female actor in a television comedy:** Rachel Brosnahan, “The

Marvelous Mrs. Maisel”; Quinta Brunson, “Abbott Elementary”; Ayo Edebiri, “The Bear”; Elle Fanning, “The Great”; Selena Gomez, “Only Murders in the Building”; Natasha Lyonne, “Poker Face.”

■ **Male actor in a television comedy:** Bill Hader, “Barry”; Steve Martin, “Only Murders in the Building”; Jason Segel, “Shrinking”; Martin Short, “Only Murders in the Building”; Jason Sudeikis, “Ted Lasso”; Jeremy Allen White, “The Bear.”

■ **Screenplay:** “Anatomy of a Fall”; “Barbie”; “Poor Things”; “Killers of the Flower Moon”; “Oppenheimer”; “Past Lives.”

■ **Best stand-up comedy television special:** Ricky Gervais, “Armageddon”; Trevor Noah, “Where Was I”; Chris Rock, “Selective Outrage”; Amy Schumer, “Emergency Contact”; Sarah Silverman, “Someone You Love”; Wanda Sykes, “I’m an Entertainer.”

The 81st Golden Globe Awards will be the first major broadcast of awards season, with a new home on CBS. And while to audiences it might look similar on the surface, it’s been tumultuous few years behind the scenes following a bombshell report in the Los Angeles Times. The 2021 report found that there were no Black members in the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which votes on the awards.

Stars and studios boycotted the Globes and NBC refused to air it in 2022 as a result. After the group added journalists of color to its ranks and instituted other reforms to address ethical concerns, the show came back in January 2023 in a one-year probationary agreement with NBC. The network did not opt to renew.

In June, billionaire Todd Boehly was granted approval to dissolve the HFPA and reinvent the Golden Globes as a for-profit organization. Its assets were acquired by Boehly’s Eldridge Industries, along with Dick Clark Productions, a group that is owned by Penske Media whose assets also include Variety, Deadline, The Hollywood Reporter, Rolling Stone and Billboard. In mid-November, CBS announced that it would air the ceremony on the network on Jan. 7. It will also stream on Paramount+.

“Anatomy of a Fall”

Best Production Design: **Sarah Greenwood**, “Barbie”

Best Score: **Mica Levi**, “The Zone of Interest,” with a recognition also of sound designer **Johnnie Burn**

Best Cinematography: **Robbie Ryan**, “Poor Things”. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Ryan Seacrest will usher in 2024 on “Dick Clark’s New Year’s



Big Time Rush members, (from left), Carlos PenaVega, Logan Henderson, James Maslow and Kendall Schmidt perform during the iHeartRadio Jingle Ball, Friday, Dec. 8, at Madison Square Garden in New York. (AP)

Rockin’ Eve” from **New York City**’s Times Square on December 31, alongside his host **Rita Ora**.

There will once again be satellite locations in Los Angeles - hosted by **Jeannie Mai** - and a Spanish language countdown with host **Dayanara Torres** live from **San Juan**’s Puerto Rico Convention Center.

The Los Angeles party boasts of a star-studded lineup: R&B up-and-comer **Coco Jones**, “What It Is” singer Doechii, pop belter **Ellie Goulding**, pop-punks Green Day and 2024 Grammy album of the year nominee **Janelle Monáe**.

Loud Luxury x Two Friends Feat. **Bebe Rexha**, **Ludacris**, **Nile Rodgers** & **CHIC**, **Paul Russell**, **Renée Rapp** and Thirty Seconds to Mars will also take the stage to usher in 2024.

In a year where “Barbie” ruled everything in pop culture, the Danish-Norwegian Europop band Aqua will revisit their best-known hit, 1997’s “Barbie Girl.” Fans of the “Barbie” movie and its soundtrack will recall that **Nicki Minaj** and Ice Spice gave the song a 2023 facelift with their collaboration, “Barbie World.”

Aqua will also perform “Doctor Jones” from their 1997 album “Aquarium.” Doechii will tackle “What It Is” and “Persuasive,” and **Green Day** will perform “Basket Case,” “Welcome to Paradise,” “Holiday,” and make the live debut of their new track, “Dilemma,” from their forthcoming album “Saviors,” out in January 2024. (AP)

The Conversation

New approach focuses on holistic well-being

Weight-inclusive care aims to end stigma, promote equity

By Lauren Butler
Texas State University

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

Weight-inclusive health care means a focus on better health with no weight loss required.

This includes practices such as eating for overall well-being rather than for the number of calories. It may also include prioritizing activities to reduce stress, avoiding smoking, drinking less alcohol and striving to be physically active in enjoyable ways.

A weight-inclusive approach to health seeks to undo the harms caused by weight stigma.

People with larger bodies often experience weight stigma as discrimination, prejudice, negative stereotypes and judgments from others - including their own doctors and other health care providers. More than 40% of US adults across a range of body sizes report experiencing weight stigma in their day-to-day lives.

Avoiding this stigma is likely a major driver behind the great lengths people in the US go to in order to lose weight. Market data shows that Americans spent some US\$72.6 billion on weight loss products and programs in 2021. In addition, weight loss efforts start early, with nearly half of all high school students in the US reporting that they have tried to lose weight.

I am a nutrition epidemiologist and registered dietitian studying the consequences of weight stigma and working to develop weight-inclusive nutrition interventions.

Practice

Initially my private practice and research approach were weight-centered. A weight-centered approach focuses on weight loss to achieve health and is widely accepted in health care settings across the world. After over a decade of work in public health nutrition, I have witnessed how, in my view, the weight-centered approach harms individuals and communities. So I have shifted to using a weight-inclusive approach in practice and research.

There is an extensive body of research and public health messaging indicating that higher body weight has links with many long-term health concerns, such as high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes.

As a result, there is a pervasive misconception that a weight-inclusive approach disregards the patient's health concerns. However, proponents of weight-inclusive care argue that a weight-inclusive approach minimizes health problems by destigmatizing weight status and promoting health equity. They also acknowledge that there are links between both higher and lower body weight and various health concerns.

The dogma that lower weight is synonymous with better health is being questioned by public health researchers and health care providers. Scientists and clinicians are calling for a paradigm shift away from a weight-centered focus on weight status and body mass index, or BMI, as indicators of health.

Advocacy groups like the Association for Size Diversity and Health

have long been promoting the Health at Every Size approach. This weight-inclusive approach affirms a socially just definition of health and advocates for equitable health care regardless of weight status. More recently, the American Medical Association released a statement outlining the harms and shortcomings of using BMI as a clinical measurement.

Substantial research shows that behaviors such as stopping smoking and drinking less alcohol can prevent disease and support overall long-term health, regardless of body weight. For example, a systematic review of one clinical trial and 152 observational peer-reviewed studies reported that a diet high in nutrient-rich foods with low or moderate alcohol consumption is associated with reduced risk of death for everyone.

Another example: One of my own clients with high cholesterol said that focusing on weight loss over their lifetime had left them stuck in a cycle of weight loss and weight regain, disordered eating, inconsistent and extreme exercise habits and body image concerns.

Active

After adopting weight-inclusive practices such as eating more fiber-rich foods and being more physically active, instead of focusing on losing weight, their cholesterol levels returned to normal.

Both the weight-inclusive approach and the weight-centered approach can include diet changes, increasing physical activity and reducing stress as key components to manage and prevent diseases. However, the weight-inclusive approach works to end weight stigma and acknowledges that factors such as socioeconomic status, culture and access to food and health care - collectively called the social determinants of health - have huge impacts on a person's body weight, shape and size. Even if a person could adhere to strict dieting and exercise routines, there will always be structural, political and other factors affecting health and weight that the individual can't control.

What's more, evidence indicates that people who lose weight generally don't have better long-term health and fail to keep those pounds off.

There are several things that people can look for in a weight-inclusive health care practice.

Look for health care providers who:

- Make weight checks optional for routine visits.
- Treat patient symptoms rather than telling them to lose weight.
- Provide patients in larger bodies the same treatment as those in thinner bodies with similar health concerns.
- Use measures other than BMI, such as lab results, to diagnose health concerns.
- Ask permission before discussing weight with patients.

For additional resources on weight-inclusive care, check out the Health at Every Size Health Sheets. Consider examining your own weight bias by taking an online test focused on implicit associations around weight. (AP)

Weedkiller chemical found in pregnant women living near farmlands, says study

By Cynthia Curl, Boise State University and Carly Hyland, University of California, Berkeley

Living near farmland can significantly increase people's exposure to glyphosate, the active ingredient in the widely used herbicide Roundup, new research shows. This chemical has been connected to health concerns, including non-Hodgkin lymphoma and a higher risk of preterm birth.

We are environmental health scientists who study pesticide exposures in human populations. In our newly published research, we tracked glyphosate levels in pregnant women for 10 months.

We found that those who were living within about a third of a mile (500 meters) of an agricultural field had significantly higher levels of glyphosate in their urine than those who lived farther away. Importantly, we only saw those differences during the time of year when farmers spray glyphosate on their fields, further suggesting agricultural spray as the source of this exposure.

Pesticides

Our research also found that eating organic food, produced without the use of synthetic pesticides, could reduce glyphosate levels in women living far from farm fields - but not in women who lived near farm fields.

Together, the results provide new insight into how people are exposed to this common and potentially harmful chemical.

Glyphosate is the single most heavily used agricultural pesticide in the world. Its use grew dramatically over the past two decades with the increase in production of genetically modified, herbicide-resistant crops. These crops are engineered to withstand the weed-killing effects of herbicides like glyphosate, which means that an entire field can be sprayed with these chemicals, eliminating the weeds without harm to the crop itself. This is a change from previous practices, where herbicide applications had to be more targeted.

While herbicides like dicamba and 2,4-D are known to become airborne, glyphosate is not volatile, so there has been less concern over its potential to drift when it is sprayed on crops.

However, our research provides evidence for the first time that agricultural use of glyphosate still reaches people living nearby.

It is important to note that there is no consensus on whether or not this widely used herbicide causes cancer.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer, part of the World Health Organization, has determined that glyphosate is "probably carcinogenic to humans," while the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has concluded that it is "not likely to be carcinogenic to humans." This debate is playing out in courtrooms across the U.S., with mixed results.

In addition to concerns about cancer risk, four recent human studies found that glyphosate exposure during pregnancy

Glyphosate exposure linked to cancer biomarkers

Doctors fear riskier, more complex procedures

Abortion delay poses risk to women's health

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP): A woman whose fetus was unlikely to survive called more than a dozen abortion clinics before finding one that would take her, only to be put on weekslong waiting lists. A teen waited seven weeks for an abortion because it took her mother that long to get her an appointment. Others seeking the procedure faced waits because they struggled to travel hundreds of miles for care.

Such obstacles have grown more common since Roe v. Wade was overturned in June 2022, doctors and researchers say, causing delays that can lead to abortions that are more complex, costly and in some cases riskier - especially as pregnancies get further along.

About half of US states now have laws that ban or restrict access to abortion. Because of that, many clinics don't offer the procedure, which has increased demand for appointments at the remaining providers.

At various points since Roe, waits in several states stretched for two or three weeks, and some clinics had no available appointments, according to results of a periodic survey spearheaded by Middlebury College economics professor Caitlin Myers and recently provided to The Associated Press. Doctors and researchers say even as wait times have lessened, people still encounter other challenges, like planning and paying for travel, taking time off work and finding child care.

"All of those things can contribute to delays, and then it kind of becomes like this vicious circle," said Dr. Daniel Grossman, an OB-GYN at the University of California, San Francisco, who co-authored a research report earlier this year that compiled anecdotes from health care providers after Roe was overturned.

People may miss the window for medication abortions, which are not generally offered past 10 to 11 weeks gestation. A dwindling number of clinics provide abortions as people move through the second trimester, which



Jillaine St. Michel stands for a portrait in Boise, Idaho on Saturday, Dec. 2. A year earlier, she learned that her previous 20-week fetus had multiple genetic and developmental problems and probably wouldn't survive. She lives in Idaho, which has a ban on abortions, so St. Michel and her husband called about 15 out-of-state clinics, finally getting on a three-week waiting list in Denver and a two-week waiting list in Seattle. Pregnant again, she is due to give birth to a boy in January. (AP)

begins at 13 or 14 weeks. Costs for the procedure change, too, from up to \$800 in the first trimester to \$2,000 or more in the second trimester.

Complication

"While abortion is safe at all points in pregnancy," with an overall complication rate of 2%, it "does get more complicated as the pregnancy continues," said Dr. Colleen McNicholas, chief medical officer at Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region. "It does carry additional risks."

At least 66 clinics in 15 states stopped providing abortions in the 100 days after Roe was overturned, according to an analysis last year by the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

The necessity for people to travel out of state is at the root of abortion delays. Clinics run by Planned Parenthood

of the Rocky Mountains, which operates in Colorado, New Mexico and southern Nevada, saw out-of-state patients more than double after Roe. And Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region's health center in Fairview Heights, Illinois, saw a 715% increase in patients from outside of Illinois or Missouri in the year after Roe.

"We know that abortion bans have caused a ripple effect and increased wait times even in states where access is protected," McNicholas said.

The ongoing Myers Abortion Appointment Availability Survey called more than 700 facilities across the United States. Its latest survey, conducted in September, found that 11 states had median appointment wait times of more than five business days and four states had waits of at least eight business days, not counting weekends or holidays. The longest wait was in Iowa: 12 business days.

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Ko & Day’s stunning 66 clinches Grant Thornton Invitational title

Toms, Andrade rally late to win World Champions Cup



Lydia Ko, left, and Jason Day, right, celebrate with the championship trophy after winning the Grant Thornton Invitational, the first mixed-team golf tournament since 1999, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023, in Naples, Fla. (AP)

Jones leads Memphis to win over Texas A&M

Da Silva helps Colorado topple Miami

NEW YORK, Dec 11, (AP): Tristan da Silva scored 16 of his 22 points during a decisive second half to help Colorado pull away from No. 15 Miami 90-63 on Sunday in an NABC Brooklyn Showcase game at Barclays Center.

KJ Simpson scored 20 points while Luke O'Brien scored all 13 of his points during the game-ending 47-17 run for



Memphis forward David Jones, top, blocks a shot-attempt by Texas A&M forward Wildens Leveque (10) during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023, in College Station, Texas. (AP)

for coach Jim Larranaga, who was born in the Bronx and graduated from Archbishop Molloy High School in Queens.

Memphis 81, Texas A&M 75

In College Station, Texas, David Jones scored 29 points and tied a career-high with five 3-pointers to lead Memphis to an 81-75 win over No. 21 Texas A&M on Sunday. Jones scored 21 points in the first half as Memphis (7-2) built a nine-point lead by halftime and didn't trail in the second half.

The Aggies scored five quick points, with a 3 from Manny Obaseki, to get within four with seven seconds left. But Jones made two free throws with five seconds to go to seal the win.

Memphis was up by eight with about eight minutes remaining when Caleb Mills made two 3-pointers in a 6-2 run that extended the lead to 69-58 a couple minutes later.

Jahvon Quinerly added a season-high 24 points and Mills had 13.

NAPLES, Florida, Dec 11, (AP): Lydia Ko hit a fairway metal to 8 feet to set up the birdie she and Jason Day needed to win the Grant Thornton Invitational on Sunday. They closed with a 6-under 66 in modified fourballs to capture the first mixed-team event in 24 years.

Playing the par-5 17th hole, Ko and Day were tied with the Canadian duo of Corey Connors and Brooke Henderson, who had to settle for two closing pars and a 63.

The format allowed for both players to hit tee shots, then switch to the other player's golf ball and finish out the hole. Day was in a bunker left of the green at the par-5 17th, no easy up-and-down. Ko had 208 into a slight wind and her fairway metal never left its target.

GOLF

It landed near the hole and rolled out about 8 feet. Her eagle putt never had a chance, but the hard work was done. Both secured easy pars on the 18th to finish at 26-under 190.

It was the first time the PGA Tour and LPGA had a mixed-team event since the JC Penney Classic in 1999.

Ludvig Aberg, the sensational rookie to win on the PGA Tour and European tour and played in the Ryder Cup since turning pro in June, teamed with fellow Swede Madelene Sagstrom to post a 60 in the final round. They finished third.

In Bradenton, Florida, David Toms and last-minute replacement Billy Andrade each won crucial points over the last three holes of their nine-hole singles matches as the Americans rallied late to win the inaugural World Champions Cup.

Andrade, an assistant captain who replaced injured Jim Furyk, birdied the seventh hole and picked up 3.5 points over Vijay Singh from the International team. In the anchor match, Toms made birdie on the eighth hole to give the Americans the lead, and they clinched it when Retief Goosen made double bogey trying to make up ground.

The matches were among players from the United States, Europe and everywhere else in the world. Points were awarded to each hole over each of the alternate-shot, better-ball and singles matches.

The Americans had 221 points, while the International team had 219 and Europe had 208.

Jerry Kelly led all scorers with 61 points for the week.

In Abu Dhabi, UAE, Kalle Samooja, Kieran Vincent and Jinichiro Kozuma won the three spots on LIV Golf rosters for 2024 by claiming the top three spots in the first LIV Golf Promotions event.

Samooja was 8-under 136 in the 36-hole shootout that followed 18-hole rounds on Friday and Saturday, each with a cut before the scores were reset. Vincent and Kozuma were part of a three-way playoff for the final two spots.

UCLA powers past Florida State 95-78

South Carolina ‘holds off’ Utah in Hall of Fame Women’s Showcase

UNCASVILLE, Conn., Dec 11, (AP): Kamilla Cardoso scored 17 points and Te-Hina Paopao added 15 on Sunday to help top-ranked South Carolina hold off No. 11 Utah 78-69 at the Hall of Fame Women's Showcase.

Freshmen MiLaysia Fulwiley and Chloe Kitts each added 11 for the Gamecocks (9-0), who have beaten four ranked teams this season.

Alissa Pili made 15 of her 23 shots from the floor and finished with 37 points for Utah (8-2).



Utah forward Alissa Pili (35) shoots as South Carolina forward Chloe Kitts, center right, defends in the second half of an NCAA college basketball game, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023, in Uncasville, Conn. (AP)

UCLA 95, Florida State 78

In Uncasville, Conn., Lauren Betts had 22 points and 18 rebounds to help UCLA beat Florida State at the Hall of Fame Women's Showcase.

Charisma Osborne and Angela Dugalic added 16 points each for the balanced Bruins (9-0), who had five players score in double figures. UCLA started the game scoring 13 of the opening 15 points and led 20-5 as Florida State made just one of its first 14 shots.

N. Carolina St 80, Liberty 67

In Raleigh, N.C., Freshman guard Zoe Brooks turned in the second triple-double in school history, helping lift North Carolina State over Liberty.

Brooks, filling in for standout Saniya Rivers for her first start, turned in 14 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists.

Asia Boone had 17 points, Emma Hess 15 points and Bella Smuda 14 points and 15 rebounds for Liberty (3-7), which suffered its 41st straight loss to a Top 25 opponent.

Iowa 87, Wisconsin 65

In Madison, Wis., Caitlin Clark scored 28 points, Hannah Stuelke added 21 and Iowa beat Wisconsin in the Big Ten opener for each team.

Iowa (10-1, 1-0) has won seven straight and eared its 28th consecutive victory over Wisconsin.

BASKETBALL

Clark, the reigning Player of the Year, hit 11 of 19 shots, including 4 of 8 beyond the arc, and had nine rebounds. Sydney Affolter had 12 rebounds for the Hawkeyes.

Southern Cali 85, UC Riverside 53

In Los Angeles, JuJu Watkins scored 27 points in 28 minutes and Southern California routed UC Riverside to remain undefeated at home.

It was the first time in four games that Watkins didn't score at least 30 points, a feat she's accomplished five times already this season. She sat down with 3 1/2 minutes remaining.

LSU 83, UL-Lafayette 53

In Baton Rouge, La., Aneesah Morrow had 27 points and 10 rebounds as LSU shook off some early lethargic play to defeat UL-Lafayette.

Angel Reese finished with 20 points and 9 rebounds. Mikaylah Williams added 18 points and 11 rebounds, hitting all four of the Tigers' 3-pointers.

Brandi Williams and Tamara Johnson led UL-Lafayette (3-3) with 14 and 13 points, respectively.

Ohio State 94, Penn State 84, OT

In Columbus, Ohio, Jacy Sheldon scored 31 points, Corie McMahon had 27 and Celeste Taylor had a double-double as Ohio State pulled away from Penn State to win their Big Ten Conference opener.

Taylor had 13 points and 11 rebounds for the Buckeyes (8-1, 1-0),

who have won eight straight. Sheldon was 13 of 14 from the line but Ohio State was just 26 of 42, with McMahon going 5 of 14.

Virginia Tech 85, Radford 40

In Blacksburg, Va., Elizabeth Kitley scored 16 points and grabbed 13 rebounds and Virginia Tech held Radford to 19% shooting to roll to victory.

Georgia Amoore added 15 points and had three of Virginia Tech's 12 blocks. Matilda Ekh added 12 points and Carleigh Wenzel 11 while matching Kitley with five assists for the Hokies (7-2).

UConn 76, North Carolina 64

In Uncasville, Conn., Paige Bueckers scored 26 points to lead UConn over North Carolina in the Hall of Fame Women's Showcase.

The former national player of the year hit 11 of her 14 shots and blocked four on the other end. Aaliyah Edwards added 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Huskies (6-3)

Louisville 73, Kentucky 61

In Louisville, Ky., Eyilia Love scored 12 of her 14 points in the second half and Louisville used a balanced attack to defeat Kentucky, winning the Battle for the Bluegrass for the seventh straight time.

Maddie Scherr had 22 points to lead the Wildcats (4-7) and Ajae Petty had 16 with 10 rebounds.

Marquette 64, Illinois State 62

In Normal, Ill., Liza Karlen scored 19 points, five in a critical fourth-quarter run, and Marquette extended its best start ever by rallying for a win over Illinois State.

The Golden Eagles had to overcome some tense moments in the closing seconds to run their record to 9-0.

Washington 60, Washington St 55

In Pullman, Wash., Hannah Stines scored a career-high 21 points, Lauren Schwartz added 20 and Washington used a hot start to upend rival Washington State.

Dalayah Daniels scored 11 points for the Huskies (10-0). Stines and Schwartz both had three 3-pointers with Stines, who had nine rebounds, hitting a critical 3 with 2:09 to play for a 57-48 lead.

Creighton 73, Wyoming 61

In Laramie, Wyo., Emma Ronsiek scored eight of her 22 points in the fourth quarter and Creighton pulled away in the third quarter to beat Wyoming.

Morgan Mally scored 18 points and Lauren Jensen finished with 16 for Creighton (7-1).

France upset New Zealand

Argentina, Australia win first Sevens titles

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Dec 11, (AP): Argentina's men and Australia's women won their first sevens titles in Cape Town on Sunday and lead the world series.

The Argentines blew away Australia 45-12 in the men's final, a week after reaching their first Dubai final. In this calendar year and including last season, Argentina has appeared in eight of 10 finals, more than any other team. Its progress since winning the Olympic bronze medal in Tokyo in 2021 signals it is shaping for a medal upgrade at the Paris Games at the end of this series.

The Australian women were the first Olympic champions in rugby sevens in 2016 but missed out in Tokyo. They're in the kind of form that should earn a medal in Paris after going two for two in finals in this series and collecting back-to-back titles in Dubai and Cape



Ireland's Daniel Wiffen celebrates after winning the gold medal in the Men's 1500m Freestyle Final at the LEN European Short Course Swimming Championships in Otopeni, Romania, Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023. (AP)

Wiffen sets short course world record

OTOPENI, Romania, Dec 11, (AP): Irish swimmer Daniel Wiffen set a short course world record in the 800-meter freestyle on Sunday, beating Grant Hackett's previous mark by almost three seconds.

Wiffen finished in 7 minutes, 20.46 seconds to take gold at the European Short Course Swimming Championships in Otopeni, Romania. Australia's Hackett had held the record for 15 years after swimming 7:23.42 at the Victoria Cham-

pionships on July 20, 2008.

France's David Aubry was second to Wiffen in 7:30.32, and bronze went to Mykhailo Romanchuk of Ukraine in 7:31.20.

SWIMMING

Wiffen had already won gold medals in the 400- and 1,500-meter freestyle events at the championships.

of them," Australia captain Charlotte Caslick said. "To go back-to-back as well - we haven't done that for a really long time, so it's set our season up really well."

The men's final became one-sided after Australia captain Nick Malouf was sin-binned. By halftime Argentina was up 28-0. German Schulz scored from an intercept, Santiago Mare scooped up a kind bounce, and Marcos Moneta went over followed by Matias Osadczuk.

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Injuries and suspensions have affected the team

Little at stake as Al-Arabi conclude AFC Cup campaign against Al-Nejmeh

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Al-Arabi will conclude its AFC Cup campaign as it faces the Al-Nejmeh at 7:00 pm at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium in the sixth round of the second group competitions.

The match holds little importance as both teams have lost the opportunity to compete for qualification. Al-Arabi currently holds third place with only 5 points, trailing behind Al-Zawraa of Iraq (8 points), while Al-Riffa of Bahrain leads the standings with 13 points and secures a spot in the finals.

Al-Nejmeh occupies the last

place with only 3 points. The qualification format includes 3 groups, with the top team from each group and the best second-placed team advancing to the semi-finals of the West Asia region.

Al-Arabi initially performed well in the tournament, securing a 2-1 victory against Al-Zawraa.

However, its performance declined in subsequent rounds, drawing with the weakest team in the group, Al-Nejmeh, in the second round, and suffering defeats against Al-Riffa in the third and fourth rounds (3-0 and 2-1, respectively).

The team's campaign concluded

ed with a 1-1 draw against Al-Zawraa in the fifth round.

With the AFC Cup's outcome already determined, Bosnian coach Darko Nestorovic, who took over from German Thomas

SOCCER

Berdaric, has an opportunity to provide young players with experience and showcase their potential.

This move aims to prepare them for upcoming competitions in the current season. Despite recent challenges, Al-Arabi is leading

the Zain Premier League standings with 20 points, edging out defending champion Kuwait. The team is set to defend its Crown Prince Cup title against Al-Shabab in the quarter-finals at the end of December.

Injuries and suspension penalties have affected Al-Arabi, with players like Hussein Ashkanani, Salman Al-Awadhi, Saif Al-Hashan, Sultan Al-Anazi, and Suleiman Abdul Ghafour facing setbacks.

However, the team is adapting to these challenges as it progresses positively in domestic competitions.



Thiam tries to dribble pass the Nejmeh player.

Kazma dominate Al-Qurain

Al-Arabi secure thrilling victory over Sulaibikhat

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Al-Arabi secured a thrilling victory over Sulaibikhat with a score of 108-96 in the eighth round of the first division of the General Basketball League. Simultaneously, Kazma demonstrated dominance by defeating Al-Qurain with a score of 92-67.

With this win, Kazma elevated its score to 13 points, securing the third position. Al-Arabi and Sulaibikhat both reached 12 points, claiming the fourth and fifth spots, while Al Qurain stands at 9 points in the seventh position.

The tournament follows a two-part league system, with the top four

comeback for Al-Arabi, as Hussein Al-Khabaz, along with American player Washington and three-pointers from Dinks, helped them outscore Sulaibikhat. Al-Akhdar finished the quarter leading 76-72.

Maintaining their momentum in the fourth quarter, Al-Arabi asserted their advantage despite the efforts of Sulaibikhat. The match concluded with a victory for Al-Akhdar, showcasing their resilience and determination.



Al-Arabi players shoot as Sulaibikhat players defend.

BASKETBALL

teams advancing to the semi-finals.

In the initial match, Al-Arabi and Sulaibikhat traded leads throughout the first quarter, concluding with Al-Akhdar in a narrow lead of 27-26. Sulaibikhat extended its advantage in the second quarter, thanks to stellar performances by American player Colbert and the Malian Alexander under the basket. Despite some defensive challenges faced by Al-Arabi, Sulaibikhat secured a lead of 57-48 by the end of the quarter.

The third quarter witnessed a

‘There has to be a reaction’

Bayern bring anger and unbeaten record to Man U in CL after 5-1 loss

DUESSELDORF, Germany, Dec 11, (AP): Six years and 39 games. That's how long it's been since Bayern Munich lost a Champions League group stage game.

That makes Tuesday's game against Bayern an especially daunting task for Manchester United. After its own loss to Bournemouth, United needs to beat Bayern to have any chance of avoiding an embarrassingly early exit from the Champions League.

Bayern - which is already qualified for the knockout stages - won't just be playing to add a 40th game to that unbeaten record. After a shock 5-1 loss to Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday, forward Thomas Müller called on his teammates to show their emotion at Old Trafford.

“There has to be a reaction following this. We need to tap into our anger, but we can't lose our heads,” he said.

The Frankfurt game was much closer than the score suggests - Bayern actually had four more shots than its opponent - but Bayern is keen to bounce back.

Midfielder Leon Goretzka suggested Bayern hadn't been helped by having 10 days without a game after its last Bundesliga match was called off because of heavy snow. He told broadcaster ZDF that Bayern had been training well, though “we couldn't have sensed in training that we'd fallen into a hole, but after kickoff today it looked very much like that.”

Against United, Bayern needs to show the Frankfurt loss was just a “slip-up,” Goretzka said.

It was Bayern's third loss of the season but the first with England captain Harry Kane in the starting lineup.

Kane had tasted defeat on his debut for Bayern against Leipzig in the German Super Cup in August, but on that occasion Bayern was already 2-0 down before Kane came on for a half-hour cameo - and he had the excuse of having been up late the night before for a medical and contract signing. Kane was an unused substitute in Bayern's only other loss of the season, an upset away defeat to third-division Saarbruecken in the German Cup.

Kane has 22 goals in 19 games

for Bayern, numbers that resemble his Munich predecessor Robert Lewandowski. The former Tottenham striker has a career seven goals in 20 games against United and scored in the entertaining 4-3 win in Munich in September.

SOCCER

The 5-1 loss to Frankfurt was Bayern's worst loss in the Bundesliga since a defeat by the same score, to the same opponent, back in 2019. On that occasion it cost coach Niko Kovac his job. Thomas Tuchel is rather more secure in his job but history shows it doesn't take much to unsettle Bayern coaches. A draw or loss at United would be Bayern's third game in a row without a win.

Bayern heads to Manchester without forward Serge Gnabry after he lasted just five minutes off the bench against Frankfurt before he had to go off with a groin strain.



Manchester United's Diogo Dalot kicks the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Bournemouth at the Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, England. (AP)

Mourinho's tactical brilliance: Roma secure valuable point with nine men

Bologna move into fifth place



Roma's Bryan Cristante (left), challenges for the ball with Fiorentina's Christian Kouame during the Serie A soccer match between Roma and Fiorentina at the Rome's Olympic stadium. (AP)

ROME, Dec 11, (AP): Jose Mourinho's Roma earned a point that seemed like a victory.

The Giallorossi held on with only nine men for a 1-1 draw with visiting Fiorentina in Serie A.

Roma moved up to fourth place and into the Champions League spots - a significant step for a team that didn't qualify for Europe's elite competition during Mourinho's first two seasons in charge.

But it was a costly point for Roma

as Paulo Dybala limped off with an apparent injury and Romelu Lukaku was shown a red card that will keep him out of a match against Bologna next weekend.

Lukaku crouched down to head in a cross from Dybala five minutes in

SOCCER

at the Stadio Olimpico. Dybala then limped off 20 minutes later.

After Roma full back Nicola Zalewski picked up his second yellow

card midway through the second half, Lucas Martinez-Quarta equalized for Fiorentina by flicking in a header with his back to the goal.

Lukaku was then shown a straight red for a foul on Christian Kouame in the 87th.

But Mourinho's men held tight and extended their unbeaten run at home to six matches.

Roma moved within four points of struggling third-place AC Milan.

Fiorentina are only one point behind Roma in seventh.

Bologna won 2-1 at last-place

Salernitana for their first away victory of the season and moved into fifth place, level on points with Roma.

Joshua Zirkzee scored twice before Simy pulled one back for the hosts.

Having taken over for the late Sinisa Mihajlovic early last season, Thiago Motta coached Bologna to a ninth-place finish last season and now has the club in contention for a spot in Europe.

Also, Frosinone and Torino drew 0-0, and Monza beat Genoa 1-0 with a goal from Dany Mota.

Delegation led by Al-Mutairi

Kuwait Special Olympics takes center stage at regional Leadership Conference in Cairo

CAIRO, Dec 11: Kuwait, represented by Special Olympics Kuwait, actively participated in the regional conference of the newly formed

Leadership Players Council in Cairo, alongside 10 Arab countries. The Kuwaiti delegation, led by player Abdullah Al-Mutairi and accom-



Official addressing participants of the conference.

Stokes expected to be fit for series start

ENGLAND, Dec 11, (AP): England test captain Ben Stokes is expected to be fit for the start of the five-test tour of India beginning Jan. 25 after being selected in a 16-man squad less than two weeks after undergoing left knee surgery.

Stokes will not bowl in the series, England director of cricket Rob Key said in a video call on Monday, though that was never the plan in the wake of his Nov. 29 operation.

Key said Stokes' surgery was a “success” and that the captain was on

course to be ready for the first test in Hyderabad from Jan. 25-29.

Stokes barely bowled in the Ashes series against Australia this year and was only a batter in the recent 50-over World Cup also held in India.

Squad: Ben Stokes (captain), Rehan Ahmed, James Anderson, Gus Atkinson, Jonny Bairstow, Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ben Foakes, Tom Hartley, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Joe Root, Mark Wood.

panied by coach Ayman Yaqoub, engaged in various conference activities, including workshops and lectures on leadership, global speaking, anti-bullying training, and personal protection. A health day was also organized, featuring insightful lectures on nutrition, physical fitness, and mental health. The recently established Regional Leaders Player Input Council, spanning the 2024-2027 cycle, consists of 10 players—5 males and 5 females. Each program is represented by a captain aged 21 years and above, accompanied by a mentor aged 25 years and above. Hoda Al-Khalidi, Vice Chairman of the Kuwaiti Special Olympics Board of Directors, emphasized the program's significance in enhancing the

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

capabilities and skills of individuals with disabilities. The initiative aims to boost their confidence, foster self-reliance and leadership, and provide a platform for discussing and addressing their various issues. Al-Khalidi highlighted the Special Olympics' keen attention to this program, underscoring its success, particularly through player Maryam Dhiab. Dhiab was chosen as the official spokesperson for the Special Olympics in the Middle East and North Africa, successfully representing individuals with mental disabilities on regional and global platforms over the past five years.

Best of the Rest

France to host Germany: World Cup runner-up France will face Germany in a friendly next March as part of its European Championship preparations.

Coach Didier Deschamps' side take on Julian Nagelsmann's struggling Germany team on March 23 at Lyon's Groupama Stadium in its first friendly match leading up to Euro 2024, which will be hosted by Germany from June 14-July 14.

Germany's 2-0 loss to Austria last month capped a year of bad results, with Germany having lost six of the 11 games it played and winning just three.

Of the teams who beat Germany - Belgium, Poland, Colombia, Japan, Turkey and Austria - only Belgium is ranked in the top 10 in the world. (AP)

Greece bans fans: All top-flight soccer matches in Greece will be played without fans in the stadiums for the next two months, in the latest crackdown on supporter violence following a sport-related riot last week that left a police officer with life-threatening injuries.

The government said Monday that it would introduce emergency legislation to make the ban on supporters effective immediately. It will end on Feb. 12 with a possible extension to follow.

This past weekend's professional soccer matches were postponed following a series of violent incidents at matches and last week's riot that occurred outside a volleyball game believed to be led by organized soccer fan groups. (AP)



Barcelona's Pedri (right), and Girona's Daley Blind challenge for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Girona at the Olympic Lluís Companys stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

Sports

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Barcelona stumble as Girona go top

La Liga title race heats up



Hani and Al-Saleh with the officials.

Al-Saleh settles for sixth at Malaysian Asian Open Championship

Squash sensation Hani wins U-15 championship title

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 11: Kuwaiti squash prodigy Abdullah Hani secured the championship title in the under-15 category at the Malaysian Asian Open Championship. In a thrilling match against Malaysian contender Ravi Kumar, Hani emerged victorious with a 3-1 score, captivating a sizable crowd that strongly supported the local player. Despite the spirited performance from Kumar, Abdullah Hani demonstrated remarkable control over the game, clinching the decisive fourth set with a score of 9-11. This triumph placed the Kuwaiti national squash player at the pinnacle of the podium, outshining a field of

SQUASH

121 competitors.

In a separate category, young talent Salman Al-Saleh, sporting the blue colors, achieved an impressive sixth place among 94 participants in the 11-year-old bracket, marking a positive outcome for Al-Saleh.

The delegation, led by Mishaal Al-Sharqawi, included technical director Ashraf Al-Karaji and coach Ahmed Abdel-Aal Al-Sebaei. The Kuwaiti team, comprising six players, showcased commendable performances across various categories. Technical director Al-Karaji lauded the players' elevated technical prowess and acknowledged their increased international experience, anticipating improved rankings in upcoming tournaments for Kuwaiti players on the global stage.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Luc Tardif, the President of the International Ice Hockey Federation, has expressed confidence in the Winter Games Club, led by his Kuwaiti counterpart, to successfully organize the upcoming fourth-level World Cup tournament in Kuwait next April. Tardif commended the club's excellent facilities and its professional technical and organizational staff.

During his three-day visit to Kuwait, Tardif highlighted the country's strong commitment to developing the Olympic Winter Games, particularly in ice hockey. He noted the enthusiasm

ICE HOCKEY

among Kuwaiti players, both male and female, at various age levels and expressed anticipation for significant international and continental championships to be hosted in Kuwait.

Tardif emphasized his dedication to supporting national federations, providing technical and administrative assistance for the game's development globally. He applauded the Winter Games Club's efforts and discussed strategies with club president Fuhaid Al-Ajmi to encourage Gulf and Arab federations to participate in regional, continental, and international tournaments.

FIFA Club WC kicks off in Jeddah

JEDDAH, Dec 11, (KUNA): The FIFA Club World Cup is set to commence in the Saudi Red Sea city of Jeddah on Tuesday, featuring the participation of two Arab clubs alongside teams from Europe and the Americas.

President Al-Ajmi underscored the visit's importance as the club prepares to host the world championship under the supervision of the International Federation of Sports. The club aims to elevate the technical skills of Kuwaiti players and promote ice hockey's growth in Kuwait, the Gulf, and the Arab region.

Both Tardif and Al-Ajmi expressed satisfaction with their meetings with Kuwaiti sports officials from the Kuwait Olympic Committee and the General Sports Authority, emphasizing the warm reception they received. The Winter Games Club remains committed to advancing the game and enhancing the technical capabilities of Kuwaiti athletes in preparation for the upcoming international event.



Players preparing for the fourth-level World Cup tournament in Kuwait.

MADRID, Dec 11, (AP): Girona made their strong case to be considered a genuine contenders for the Spanish league title by beating Catalan rival Barcelona 4-2 and overtaking Real Madrid at the top of the standings.

Ukraine forwards Artem Dovbyk and Viktor Tsygankov teamed up for Girona's opener, and Miguel Gutierrez, Valery Fernández and Cristhian Stuani scored a goal each to seal the away victory against the defending league champions. Robert Lewandowski and Ilkay Gundogan scored Barcelona's goals.

The statement win moved Girona two points ahead of Madrid, which drew 1-1 with Real Betis. Barcelona dropped to fourth place, seven points behind their regional rivals and five behind Madrid. Atletico Madrid regained third place with a 2-1 win over last-place Almeria to extend their winning streak at home in the league to 17 matches. Atletico have the same 34 points as Barcelona with a game in hand.

SOCCER

Barcelona had never lost in six matches against Girona in the league, with four wins and two draws.

"Girona deserves a lot of credit. It has a great team," Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández said. "It was an even match, it could have gone either way. It also would have been a fair result if we had won it."

Girona, partly owned by Manchester City's Abu Dhabi ownership, never looked like the minnow club against Barcelona, showing maturity and poise from the start at the Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium.

The team coached by Michel Sánchez, sporting a white and blue uniform with similar colors to Man City, has been playing some of the best soccer in Spain and holding on to its position near the top from the start of the season.

"It's a special victory, it gives us the lead," Michel said. "Very happy with the result because we faced a great Barça team."

Girona had won 12 of their first 15 league matches, though they had failed in their first big test when they lost 3-0 to Real Madrid at home in September.



Barcelona's Pedri (left), and Girona's Viktor Tsygankov challenge for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Girona at the Olympic Lluís Companys stadium in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

There was no problem against Barcelona, though.

The visitors opened the scoring in a breakaway in the 12th minute. Dovbyk found the net from close range after completing a low cross by his countryman Tsygankov. Barcelona equalized with a header by Lewandowski off a corner kick taken by Raphinha in the 19th, but Girona retook the lead in the 40th with a nice shot by Gutiérrez into the top corner from inside the area.

Fernández scored Girona's third in the 80th before Barcelona pulled closer with Gundogan's goal two minutes into stoppage time. Stuani restored Girona's two-goal advantage five minutes into injury time.

The game between Granada and Athletic Bilbao was suspended after a fan suffered a cardiac arrest and died in the stands.

Granada said the fan had been a season ticket holder for 16 years. No further details were given about the fan's identity.

Atletico won their 17th consecutive match at home to extend their biggest winning run in the competition as a host.

Álvaro Morata and Ángel Correa scored a goal each in the first half before Almeria pulled one back through Léo Baptista after halftime.

Coach wants to go back in transfer mkt

Chelsea's \$1 bln spending 'spree' hasn't worked out

LONDON, Dec 11, (AP): Chelsea has managed to do something few thought could be possible: Spend \$1 billion on players and not get any better.

In fact, there's a case to be made that the team which still held the status of European champion as recently as 18 months ago has deteriorated after an unprecedented spending spree that stunned the soccer world.

Approaching the halfway stage of the Premier League campaign, Chelsea is languishing in 12th place - sandwiched between Wolverhampton and

SOCCER

Brentford - having finished last season in the exact same position.

That despite spending \$280 million in the summer of 2022, \$350 million in January this year and more than \$400 million in the most recent offseason.

Turns out Chelsea might need to spend some more.

"Our reality now is midtable," Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino said after the team's 2-0 loss at Everton on Sunday that exposed many of its underlying problems. "And if we want to go up, we have to push ourselves."

"When the transfer window opens, (we will) see what we can do."

The alarming thing is that Chelsea's heavily transformed squad still looks short in key areas despite the huge outlay on 29 players since May 2022, mostly on long contracts to spread "amortization" costs of transfer fees.

Pochettino has only had one fit senior striker to call on for most of this season - and that is Nicolas Jackson, a raw, 22-year-old Senegal international signed on the back of a strong second half of last season at Villarreal. Jackson's finishing has been erratic and he has struggled to cope with the demands of leading the attack of a much-scrutinized team at such an early stage of his career.

Plenty was expected of France strik-



Chelsea's head coach Mauricio Pochettino reacts during the English Premier League soccer match between Everton and Chelsea at Goodison Park Stadium, in Liverpool, England. (AP)

er Christopher Nkunku but he hasn't been seen since sustaining a serious knee problem in preseason, while Armando Broja has been in and out because of injuries.

Chelsea managed 16 shots against Everton but only four were on target.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the field, the defense is being held together by a 39-year-old, Thiago Silva, who had to be rested against Everton because it was Chelsea's third game in a week.

Center backs Axel Disasi and Benoit Badiashile were both plucked from French club Monaco this year but have yet to establish themselves. Reece James, the newly appointed captain, was forced off against Everton with the latest in a long line of injuries - it was a hamstring issue this time - and left back Ben Chilwell is also currently sidelined through injury.